

THE
ORPHANS OF SNOWDON.

A NOVEL.



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BY MISS GUNNING.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE
ORPHANS OF SNOWDON.

LORETTA's desire of reaching Bristol nothing could have restrained, but the tender apprehensions that the fatigue and hurry of posting might inconvenience the ease of her two companions, one advanced towards seventy, the other considerably turned of fourscore ; a consideration that made her support, without repining, a tedious journey of three days, which filial impatience persuaded her might have been accomplished in one.

Bridgewater being the last town where they slept, it was yet light when they

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reached the green lane. Loretta found it impossible any longer to master her impatience, and begged to be set down. Her two friends very readily complied, promising to wait her return, which she assured them should be as soon as she should have seen and embraced her dear mother, whom they would all together visit the next morning, and settle the plan of her own future residence at the cottage. Thus parted the affectionate trio.

Loretta flew up the lane, and was out of sight in a moment, whilst the others remained in the carriage to talk over the beauties, the graces, and the virtues of their beloved absentee.

The triumph of Despair over Hope is never so tremendous, or compleat, as when the latter finds itself vanquished,—fanguine in its own prowess, vigorous in its strength!

Loretta's



Loretta's hope of beholding a parent had almost coupled with certainty ; nor had she made allowance for the instability of human events, when, breathless with expectation, she knocked at the humble door of her widowed mother.

All was quiet ! No key turned in the lock ! No bolt drew back ! No hospitable sound bid her come in ! Loretta shuddered ! She called aloud—her voice was the voice of agony—it pierced the ears of echo, who returned it in the same strain of pity, moving compassion !

There was only one casement open, the rest were fastened with shutters ; it was a low and narrow one, which gave light to a small pantry. With incredible exertions Loretta forced her delicate form through the only aperture by which she could gain admittance, first taking out the single pane of glass that covered the orifice ; an expe-

riment attended with no small danger, for the heel of her shoe having caught in the window frame, she hung suspended with her head on the brick floor until recollection came to her aid, by which she was enabled to disentangle her imprisoned foot, and with only one shoe darted through the cottage rooms. She examined every part of them, saw every thing in the same place where she had seen them before, but saw not the beloved inhabitant !

Heedless of damps, fearless of thorns or gravel, which might penetrate her poor, defenceless foot, she next rushed into the garden, where nothing was presented to her view but weeds, of sufficient growth to testify the very long time it must have been neglected.

Fondly remembering the spot on which she first poured out her tears on the bosom of a mother insensible to their warmth, Loretta

retta laboured to tear away the weeds which opposed the contact of her lips with the tufted grass on which that dear mother so often reposed. Already had she accomplished the union; but whilst kissing the cold earth, and plentifully watering it with her tears, she was suddenly roused by the voices of her travelling companions, who, being alarmed at her long unaccountable absence, and knowing from her description nearly where the cottage must be situated, they had approached it with quivering hearts and trembling joints, dreading at every step to discover that some fatal accident had befallen their favourite, on whom they were calling with all the vigorous spirit that remained yet unconsumed in their chalice of strength.

Loretta having let them in, and related, as well as grief would permit, the lamentable tale of her unlooked for disappointment, was at last somewhat comforted by

Jonathan assuring her, that neither he or Mrs. Orchard would turn their backs upon Bristol until they had assisted her in every possible search after her missing parent.

A mercantile city like that in which their enquiries commenced, where all is bustle and confusion, where every man, woman, and child, are so deeply occupied in their own affairs, as to know little of those which concern their neighbours, was not likely to be productive of information respecting a couple of solitary individuals, who seemed to be entirely unknown both in and out of the city. Every body questioned on the subject replied in much the same words—“that they had never heard tell of such people;” so that, at the end of four days, Loretta’s anxious suspense increased rather than diminished; and at last she was forced to part with her respected friends, who returned to the Lodge, whilst she proceeded to London in one of the two days stages, resolved

resolved to shew her dutiful obedience to what she supposed the will of Mrs. Osmond, by the most patient submission to that of her daughter, piously leaving the protection of her own mother to the care of heaven's never-failing Providence :—— sometimes hoping (what Jonathan had taken much pains to make her believe) that her parent was not dead, but, for reasons which may have occurred, had been removed from that cottage to another situation.

Immediately on her arrival in town Loretta put herself into a chair, and, with all the little matters belonging to Lady Acres carefully placed on her lap, a porter following with her own boxes, she proceeded, weeping and trembling, to that house, where she had received the fondest maternal indulgence, where she had also experienced the cold severity of an haughty and over-bearing superiority.

One little comfort still nestled in her heart—she should once more look upon the sweet face of her beloved Harriet—she should read in her pity-speaking eyes that the restraints of duty, though never to be lessened, were equally galling to both.

Loretta's sentiments had in them no dash of the romantic, flimsy foundation, on which many girls build their airy superstructures of friendship. She knew how to discriminate between professions and realities. Happy in possessing the esteem of Miss Acres, vanity only could have made her discontented, because debarred from receiving public testimonies of so distinguishing a preference.

Notwithstanding all the pleasure Montgomery's wandering orphan had proposed to herself from an interview, however short or distant, with the daughter of Lady Acres,

Acres, yet so much was she impressed with awe for the latter, that it would be difficult to determine, whether she was most comforted or disappointed to find that both ladies were set out to join Sir John Acres at his seat in Northumberland, from which they were not soon expected to return.

Having received many officious attentions from the housekeeper, with that sweet and thankful graciousness, which drew her near to all hearts about which were twined the tendrils of sympathy, she asked the good woman, If Lady Acres had left any particular commands for her? To which the other replied (at the same taking a letter from a locked drawer, which she delivered into her hand), "I suppose, Ma'am, this will inform you better than I can; for my Lady charged me to give it the moment you arrived."

Loretta looked at the superscription ; it was only directed to Loretta Montgomery, and the contents ran thus :—

“ I hope you are returned from your journey well enough to go immediately to the place I have provided for you. My Lady Tillison has engaged you, on my recommendation, at twenty guineas a year, and is extremely impatient that you should come to your place ; so, as soon as you receive this, set out for ———, in Essex.— Take one of my servants to shew you where the coach goes from. Half of your dear Lady’s cloaths shall, when I come back, be sent after you ; the other half I think, in justice, belong to the other attendant ; but as my good mother gave you the preference in many respects, and seemed desirous from her first picking you up on Mendip Hills, that, after her death, you might be retained in my family, which being out of my power to comply with, I
shall,

shall, for her sake, pension you at the same wages I should have given had you taken the place of my woman; and that, being twenty-five pounds a year, will, when added to those of my Lady Tillison, make you a very decent fortune. So pray, Loretta, when you meet with any thriving tradesman, who is willing to make you his wife, do not be ashamed to let me know it; because, if a moderate sum should suit him better than the annuity, perhaps I shall accommodate the matter to your mutual wishes. What I desire in return for my great care of your establishment, is, that you will hold no chattering in the family where I have placed you, on the silly figure you once made in mine. Such boasting would do you no credit, but certainly forfeit my protection for ever.

“ I have signified to Lady Tillison that you are a very honest, sober, diligent, and ingenious young body, who has faithfully

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discharged.

discharged her duties about the person of my poor deceased mother. She, dear woman, *meant* every thing well ; yet, with the best intentions, we are all frail mortals, and must sometimes do wrong ! I mean no reflections on you, child, because I have never found you bold, aspiring, or giving yourself airs, on her *improper* indulgences.

“ Am I not the most impartial creature in the world ? That you was brought up like a lady was not your fault. No more can I blame you for having sat at *my* table, than I could blame *my* footman because he happened to be in the room when that awkward animal, Lady Heartfree, by kicking her heels, threw down one of my beautiful China vases, and broke it in a thousand pieces. It was a terrible accident, and happened but yesterday, so that it still remains a great weight on my spirits.

“ The

“ The young lady on whom your attendance is particularly stationary, I hear, will remove to her apartments at St. James’s in the course of a few weeks, to succeed the Hon. Miss Wrinkle, who has obtained the Queen’s consent to make herself ridiculous, by marrying a man twenty years younger than she is.

“ I would have you always consider, Loretta, when you meet with an offer amongst your equals, that disparity of ages should not entirely be overlooked, except on the *man’s* side : but if he be more than double your age, then I would advise you to close with the bargain ; for, in that case, it is reasonable to suppose, by the accumulation of years, united to industry, he must have more money, in proportion, than a younger candidate.

“ You see, child, what pains I take for your future as well as present establishment.

ment. But this is not all: I have made your path so plain, that you have not any thing to fear on the score of ridicule, for the mock gentility in which, under my roof, you have too often appeared. I have convinced every body who have ever seen you in a light so unfavourable to common sense, that my poor mother, who would have it so, was a little superannuated, and that no blame could be laid to the charge of arrogance on your part.

“ However I would advise you to keep out of the sight of these people as much as you can; though I do not think any of them will molest you with their notice, being all perfectly satisfied with the apology I have made for you. Yet, I repeat, do not push yourself in the way of such as may recollect you; neither quote *my* name, or the name of my daughter, in any of the little histories you may tell for the entertainment of your fellow servants. Remember

ber also, on these conditions, only, I continue your friend and well-wisher,

“ H. ACRES.”

The contents of this most mortifying epistle gave little or no offence to the well-regulated temper of Loretta. Such parts of it as she could she thought it her duty to obey, and set about it with chearfulness. How few girls, once so exalted by all that is excellent in woman, now so degraded by all that is spiteful in woman, could have submitted to her fate without murmuring? —Loretta felt, perhaps, the humiliation, yet scorned to complain of injustice; not from pride or pique, but from soul-bred dignity, which set her far above the reach of all mental sufferings for the errors of others: for the like errors in herself she would have been grieved. So she thought; and it was the severest thought she could bestow on the conduct of Lady Acres, for whom

whom, on her departure from town, she left behind her the following short epistle—

“ *Madam,*

“ In obedience to your Ladyship’s commands I am just setting off for Essex, and shall endeavour to regulate my behaviour by such rules of rectitude as shall do no discredit to your Ladyship’s recommendation. I am already so much indebted to the late and ever revered Mrs. Osmond’s benevolence, that I should blush to be any longer a burden on the charity of her family. —Whilst I testify my gratitude for your Ladyship’s bountiful intentions, I presume to hope you will not be offended at my declining a pension by no means necessary to an unambitious young woman, who is willing, and, by the permission of Providence, able to gain a comfortable livelihood : but should misfortune or ill health take from me the power of providing for my very
few

few wants, then will I thankfully avail myself of your proffered liberality ; being at all times

“ Your Ladyship’s

“ Very dutiful and obedient servant,

“ LORETTA MONTGOMERY.”

This was not the only letter written by Loretta prior to her departure from London. She wrote three others—to her brother, to Mrs. Brown, and to Mrs. Orchard, the contents of which were so heart rending, even to herself, a lost mother being the chief subject, that tears, often as she wiped them from her eyes, would fall on the paper, and obscure the fair characters her pen had traced.

Sir Philip Tillison’s family, from not having lived much in the gay world, bore
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in their manners a much stronger resemblance to those of the sixteenth than seventeenth century. Sir Philip, in youth, had been an honest senator, a good statesman, and a brave soldier; was in age an affectionate husband, a tender father, an hospitable neighbour, and a kind master; but extremely ceremonious, extremely regular in his division of time, and the appropriation of it according to what he supposed the original intention of Providence.

Lady Tillison was much after the manner of her husband. She had the best heart in the world; but the most uniform rectitude of conduct made her rather an unpleasant companion to those who happened to be less circumspect than herself; nor would she, however exalted their rank, court any such to her society.

Miss Tillison, the more immediate mistress of Loretta, had a mixture of her father's

ther's formality and her mother's primitive adherence not only to virtue itself, but to all the modest, obsolete graces of virtue. How far such notions might fit her for a situation on the fashionable theatre of high life, was certainly not consulted when family interest got her the appointment at St. James's; yet when obtained unknown to her parents, was the very reason why they did not reject it: had they been less assured of *her* prudence, their own would have been her best safeguard.

There are some women never old enough, so there are others never too young, to become the pilot of their own conduct; and of the latter description was Miss Tillison. — Besides being very pretty, she had also, underneath the cold ashes of reserve, partly hereditary, partly acquired by education, a warm susceptible heart, by which her actions were guided, though its narrow powers did not extend so far as to external appear-

appearance. Her mind was enlightened, but her manners not illumined by the kindly rays of benevolence.

Such the family on whom the love-inspiring daughter of Montgomery was now thrown for protection, and by whom received with that portion of kindness considered as due to their domestics; always assiduous for their comfort, but never dwindling into familiarity.

They were all sitting together in the library when informed that the young woman sent by Lady Acres was arrived. Miss Tillison would have gone out to see how she liked her; but Sir Philip and his Lady expressing some curiosity, ordered her to be shewn in.

When Loretta took upon her the condition of a servant, her good sense made her lay aside such appearances as are connected

ned with the appendages of gentility; though in these days of equality, when Lords and Ladies dress like servants, and servants dress like Lords and Ladies, the difference between them, it must be confessed, is hardly to be distinguished by any body but themselves.

In the humble Loretta's habit might have been seen what is *fitting*, but not what is generally adopted, to her station.

Her deep mourning, assisted with the deepness of her sorrow for the sad occasion on which she wore it, and that admitting not as yet the adornment of dawning cheerfulness, neither did her gown admit of ornamental trimmings—no flounce, no furbelow, spoke her above the degree of a chambermaid in the days of our great-great-grandmothers; nor, to the contrary, could any discovery be made by the fineness of her linen, by a Frenchified head, by bu-
gle

gle decorations, or by a hat bedizened with feathers, or flowing with ribbons.

Loretta's hair not only retained its natural form, but its incomparable beauty was modestly concealed, as much as the luxurious fair curls could be concealed, beneath a round cap, over which presided a decent black bonnet, of such unfashionable dimension, as nearly to shade from the view a face so passing lovely, as youthful poets dream of, and fancy painters draw from originals only existing in their own imaginations.

About the luminary of true beauty are rays like those of the sun; and as these emit their brightness over the whole surface of the globe, so do those penetrate through every obstacle that may be invented to obscure them, and dazzle the eyes of all beholders.

Such

Such was the effect produced by the unaided loveliness of Loretta, as with dignified humility, arising from conscious rectitude, she broke upon the vision of Sir Philip, his Lady, and daughter, who were equally pleased with the mild harmony of her voice, and the respectful timidity of her replies to the few questions they asked concerning her late mistress, and the welfare of Lady Acres; never once surmising she appeared during her residence in that family in any other light than a menial dependant, as such being strongly represented to them by her Ladyship.

When dismissed from the presence of her intentionally kind, but literally, awe inspiring superiors, Loretta was conducted by a servant to the apartment of Miss Tiffson, whither that young lady immediately followed.

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The deep-rooted sadness of her new attendant, in whose favour no heart, but that of Lady Acres, could have been unprejudiced, did not escape the notice of Miss Tillison, who, to dissipate that chagrin, which she supposed to proceed partly from regret for the loss of her last mistress, and partly from finding herself amongst strangers, very condescendingly shewed her several little fancy performances, of which number was the design for a petticoat, to be embroidered on crape in foils and silver.

“ And this,” cried she, with a sigh; “ must be done before I kiss hands for my appointment. My mother says the Queen is pleased with young women who are presented to her in their own work. I wish the work of any other body would please her as well; for though Lady Acres says you do these sorts of things, yet, with your assistance,

assistance, I am sure we shall not get it ready by the time it will be wanted."

Loretta requested that the execution might devolve entirely on her, under the direction of Miss Tillison's more improved genius.

"What are you proposing?" said the young lady, with a look of astonishment.—
"Is it possible you should undertake to do in one month what would cost me two months of indefatigable labour to perform?"

"I think, Madam," replied Loretta, blushing, "that, with your permission, I should be able to do it in the time you mention, if I might intrude on your goodness for one small indulgence."

"Oh, pray, let me hear what it is; for it must be unreasonable indeed, should I be tempted to refuse you?"

“ It is only, Madam,” colouring deeper than before, “ that any one of the female servants may be allowed to serve me in the room where I work with a plate of meat from the second table, to avoid any unnecessary interruptions, such as must occur were I to mix with your other domestics, till my work is finished.”

“ I shall certainly propose what you desire to my mother; but I doubt if, for your own sake, she will give her consent to your working so much, and taking so little pleasure.”

Loretta, whose very soul was in this request, anxiously trembling for its success, redoubled her intreaties with so much fervour, that Miss Tillison, unable any longer to resist the importunities of so sweet a pleader, obtained permission from her mother for the industrious daughter of Montgomery to live as much to herself as she pleased,

pleased, provided she did not injure her health by the total neglect of exercise; which terms were most thankfully accepted.

“ I have all my life been an early riser,” said she, “ and shall walk in the garden an hour every morning, and, when the weather is fair, another in the evening, and so husband the light for shading my flowers, that no time shall be lost either in the pursuits of health or the duties of my station.”

Trifling as the indulgence granted to Loretta appeared to Lady Tillison and her daughter, it was in the estimation of Loretta herself a favour of the greatest magnitude; that noble pride which could submit to the lowest degradation of honest independence, was equally capable of supporting its own true dignity. She would readily have eat at the same table with the house or kitchen maid, but to become the

companion of male servants!—against this sacrifice not only her pride, but delicacy, so strenuously revolted, that she would have forfeited her newly attained situation, and the duty she still supposed due from her to Lady Acres on the score of her blessed benefactress, rather than submit to the most lowering of all humiliation.

Transported at the success of her long planned innocent stratagem to save herself from the dreaded misfortune of being thought ungrateful or arrogant, she made such a progress in her work, that it was finished, in the highest style of execution, several days before Miss Tillison was summoned to officiate in the office of her courtly appointment; at which time she had gained so much on the approbation not only of her young mistress, but also on Sir Philip and his Lady, that the latter, although the most stately people in the world, before they returned to Essex, after
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seeing their daughter installed in all her honours, and comfortably established in her own apartment in the palace, recommended it to her that Loretta might be permitted to be the associate of her retired hours, such as were not occupied by visitors or engagements; to which she readily assented, having imbibed for the sweet Orphan of Snowdon the most unequivocal affection, but much more warmly felt than expressed.

Lady Tillison having taken upon herself the care of an unfortunate child, of about six years old, distantly related to her husband, who being often in the room with Loretta whilst she remained in Essex, was seen to have improved so wonderfully under her eye, both in the decency and elegance of her manners, that, not to deprive her little charge of such apparent advantages, Lady Tillison determined she should spend a few months at the palace, which was

entirely agreeable to the Maid of Honour, and more than agreeable to Loretta, who found in the child's innocent conversation a great relief to the solitude of her situation.

Retired as that was, her inclinations were no less averse to company; so that our Orphan of Snowdon, whenever the busy hum of many butterfly visitors, who now swarmed to pay their compliments at the apartment of her Lady was over, she would hastily and joyfully retreat to her own chamber, and there employ herself either by giving lessons to her little girl, or in writing to her brother, from whom she had heard nothing since the death of Mrs. Osmond, and to her friends at the Lodge, as well as those in Ireland, from all of which she received such tender answers, as at once cheered her heart, and drew tears from her eyes.

Daddy

Daddy Brown and his worthy wife continued to assure her, with the truest paternal fondness, that they should soon return to receive her into their arms, and to put her beyond the reach of dependance, even on themselves; whilst the good folks at the Lodge promised to make her the heiress of their little all, whenever it should please God to close the volume of their days.

In the society of her amiable young mistress Loretta exceedingly delighted, because she had the gratification to perceive that to her she relaxed from that extreme shyness which rendered her company far less valuable to others, it being a most heinous crime against the ease of modern good breeding, for which she was not to be forgiven, and of which the most striking courtly examples could not divest her; so that, at the end of a few weeks, Miss Tirlifon was voted, by her sister belles, either a fool, a prude, or an hypocrite, for the

unanswerable reason, that she would not do even once what they did every day.

Imprimis. She would not coquette—she would not stare humble merit out of countenance—she would not out-talk actors in the play-house—or out-hum the sweet sounds of harmony at the performance of an opera—which at last so exasperated the whole circle of fashionables, both mothers and daughters, that, by the way of wit or derision, they nick-named her *My Grandmother.*

Any young man belonging to their parties, if hardy enough to speak favourably of or gallantly to her, was called his Grandmother's Nurse, and immediately sent to Coventry, from whence he was no more permitted to return until he had achieved the reputation of publicly treating his grandmother with some mark of manly neglect; such as not handing her to her chair,

chair, though standing at her elbow, when all the ladies round had every one of them their escorts; or by making believe he had asked her to dance, leading her into the set, and desiring to know who was her partner, that he might go to find him;—when, with a look of astonishment, she naturally replied, “I thought, my Lord, or I thought, Sir, I came here at your request.” Then carelessly to answer in the hearing of a dozen giggling girls—“Faith, Madam, I am very sorry for the mistake, but have been engaged for the two first dances this half hour. More I would not undertake to save my country—then was female triumph compleat, and then was the offender’s pardon ratified.”

Miss Tillison had too much philosophy to be hurt by slights, which did not proceed from any impropriety in her own conduct; sometimes she would pass them by unobserved; sometimes speak of them

to Loretta, but never with pique or passion, only as a matter of mirth, by which she hoped to divert the unconquerable sadness of her humble companion; and on these occasions would produce such talents of harmless gaiety, such exquisite strokes of true humour, as really surprised Loretta, as much as it pleased her; having never suspected that she possessed the splendid in as great a degree as she did the rational ornaments of her sex.

One day as they sat working together, Mr. Melbourn was announced. It might not be the very Mr. Melbourn proposed to Miss Acres, yet the name brought Harriet to the mind of Loretta as she rose to leave the room before he made his appearance, but Miss Tillison prevented her. "You must not go," said she, with a sigh and a blush, "it is only my cousin;" and immediately entered a very handsome young man, who cried out as he ran to embrace her,

her, with much cordiality, "Ah! my sweet little cousin, you are grown so womanly since I saw you last, that my eyes do not half so readily acknowledge you, as does my heart."

"Do not talk of your heart," said Miss Tillison, trying to conceal under an easy reception, certain agitations which did not escape the notice of Loretta, "do not, Cousin Algernon, jest with that heart, which I suppose you have presented in due form to Miss Acres; therefore it should encourage no recognitions, but such as are warranted by her authority. However, I am truly glad to see you, so sit down, that I may have leisure to tell you so again and again."

He did as she desired, and began to enquire with much affectionate volubility, concerning the health as well as residence of Sir Phillip and his aunt, when he stopped in the middle of his speech to honor Lo-

retta with a bow, it being the first time he perceived that a third person had a right to his notice; and was just going to accuse Miss Tillison for not introducing him, when the modest daughter of Montgomery guessing his intentions, and willing to prevent the mistake into which he was evidently falling, said to her fair Mistress, "you have not given me your orders Madam, what dress to prepare for you against the evening."—Melbourn looked with amazement!—The young lady replied smiling, "I admire your ingenuity, so I do also your modesty; but do not leave us, it will be time enough to talk of these matters after dinner."

"I thought to have asked you for a dish of tea this evening," said Melbourn, "but as you are engaged abroad, may I not have the honor of being exhibited at the same assembly, either as your cousin, and under your immediate tuition; or else

as a monster of perfection, just imported from the land of liberty, cruelly condemned, and very soon to be executed in his own country."

"Indeed!" retorted Miss Tillison laughing, to hide her chagrin, upon my word, "your compliment to Miss Acres is not very captivating; I am told by my aunt she is handsome."

"Oh, yes, to be sure, that is my good mother's opinion! What my own will be, is quite another affair. If we should not happen to coincide, in spite of my duty and reverence, which is really very sincere, after all, most certainly, my dear Olly, I shall take the liberty to chuse for myself."

Miss Tillison coloured excessively, and without knowing what she said, told him he was very much in the right; then consciously and suddenly gave a turn to the subject

subject of marriage by asking a thousand questions, in accents of volubility unusual to her at all times, particularly when talking to a man, even if that man was her own father; but the truth is, she happened to have been brought up in childhood with her cousin; and it is doubtful, whether she did not love him as well as her father, though certain, that she did not fear him quite so much.

“ But you do not tell me, Olly,” said he, “ whether I am to have the honor of attending you in the evening, for to-morrow my mother is determined to drag my body into Northumberland; but *now* I am sure I shall leave my heart behind me.”

Miss Tillison's confusion seemed to announce, with regret, the impossibility of their meeting any more that day, because, being in waiting, she must go to the play; adding, that after the Queen had done
with

with her, instead of going any more into public, she always returned home sufficiently fatigued to enjoy the remainder of the night in undisturbed sleep.

“Rash girl!” replied Melbourn, with a smile of approbation, “How dare you fly thus in the countenance of Fashion? I would advise you to the practice of greater submission, or she will give your face, because it is a fair one, slap for slap, depend on it!”

“That,” cried she gaily, “she has often tried; but if such blows do not hurt the giver more than the receiver, by the rebound of utter silence the effect must be so insignificant, that neither party will be materially worsted.”

Loretta wished this agreeable trifling at an end, in hopes the discourse might again revert to her beloved Miss Acres, not unmixed

mixed with surprise, that she had never before heard of the family relationship between the mothers of Harriet's destined husband and Lady Tillison. Indeed had she known it, her knowledge must have proceeded from inspiration; because, though of inestimable worth, every one of the Tillison's were tinctured with such incorrigible reserve, as never to speak on any but the most common topics before their equals; of course, cautiously avoided ever speaking of their own affairs in the hearing of their servants or dependants.

The tender, but respectful friend of Miss Acres, had the mortification of seeing the cousins take leave of each other, until Mr. Melbourn should come back from Northumberland, without the name of that dear girl being any more mentioned by either of them; which, perhaps, may be reasonably accounted for by the gentleman's total indifference for one lady, and the

the other lady's more than indifference for himself. He did not like the royalty mode of marriage planned for him by his mother—he did not like a first-night matrimonial *tête-à-tête*—and he did not like to speak of her to whom he never had spoken. Olivia Tillison did not like that he should be married to any body but herself—she did not like that he should run the risk of a first impression—and she did not like to put him in mind that there was any other woman in the world who ought to have any claim on his heart but herself.

Miss Tillison never talked to Loretta of her cousin after he was gone; probably fearing it might encourage her to speak of the rival she dreaded with partiality, she being the grand-daughter of Mrs. Osmond, the heiress of a family where she had found protection as a favoured domestic. How then could she have been other than eloquent in praise of Harriet Acres, whose
praises

praises already she had heard but too warmly expressed by many other admirers of that young lady, and which she was not disinterested enough respecting the destination of Algernon Melbourn to hear without vexation, though on no other occasion was envy ever admitted to her truly artless bosom.

She did not sleep well that night, and looked pale the next morning, for which she accounted to Loretta by many imaginary causes, omitting only the real one.—“I am not quite well,” said she; “I caught cold at the play. I am mistress of the carriage to day, and we will go a little way into the country, to try if the air may not do me good.”

Whilst the Maid of Honour's coach waited in the court she opened a letter from Sir Philip, which determined her what road to take, a point not decided on before.

before. He desired, with her very first leisure, she would wait on the Dowager Countess of St. Alban's, then at her villa near town, on a matter of business, which she thus explained to Loretta as they drove along, accompanied by the little Agnes.

"You must know," said she, "this Dowager Countess, to whom I am going to make court by order of my father, is, with an excellent well disposed mind, in all other considerations, one of the proudest women in the world, and expects more homage than Majesty itself. The family mansion is situated in our neighbourhood, though now totally neglected. Castle St. Alban's is a princely residence, without any other inhabitant than servants to keep it in decent condition.

"But this desertion from our vicinity is not the worst part of our complaint. There are certain portions of her jointure, which she

she has also the power of selling or bequeathing, that are intermingled with other fields belonging to one of my father's estates, which he wants to dispose of, having a very advantageous offer, but cannot conclude it without permission for the purchaser to make a road through one of her fields; and it is to obtain this favour that I am now to try my interest.

“ My father and her Ladyship have still a great respect for each other, though it is sixteen years since they met, of course I cannot remember her; but I know when the late Lord died, the present was only sixteen years old, and he has been of age several months.

“ They say he is extremely handsome, amiable, and accomplished, notwithstanding that his mother would never suffer that he should be absent from her even to receive his education at public schools, much
less

less could she think of parting with him to visit foreign countries, so that to private masters alone, if report is to be credited, he is indebted for the most extensive knowledge in the languages, men, and manners, modern as well as ancient, for more graces than the most graceful, and for greater philanthropy than commonly marks the characters of young men of his age and consequence."

Loretta thought she had never seen her Lady half so agreeable as in these easy communications, and felt so much interested in the fine qualities of Lord St. Alban, that she could not help wishing his Lordship might be attracted by the charms of Miss Tillison, and that his might supersede in her heart the image of Algernon Melbourn, whom having seen and approved, she now desired might compleat his projected union with Miss Acres.

Alas !

Alas ! how little did she suspect, that in consulting what she thought the happiness of her friend, she unwillingly assassinated the dearest interest of her brother !

The villa of Lady St. Alban was so pleasantly situated on the banks of the Thames, so that Miss Tillison and her beautiful attendant being very sufficiently engaged in admiring the retreating objects, had no leisure for noticing those which were approaching, or otherwise must have seen long before they did see it, one that very much surpassed them all. It was the elegant Lord St. Alban, mounted on a horse whose figure did not disgrace his own.—

They never perceived him until he was passing them at about the centre of a straight avenue, nor probably would have observed him then, but for the eagerness with which he looked into the carriage, fixing his fine eyes on the face of Loretta, as if he meant to leave them behind him.

“ What

“What can make the man stare so?”
said the Maid of Honour.

“I can’t conceive, Madam,” replied
the Orphan of Snowdon, her cheeks covered with blushes.

“Then, pray,” continued the first speaker,
“take notice, through the back glass, what
is the colour of his groom’s coat, and whether
the lace on his hat be gold or silver.”

Loretta did so, but suddenly drew back
her head, and before she could say what
she had seen, the coachman, who at the
request of Miss Tillison had been moving
slowly along through the enchanting scenes
that every where surrounded them, put an
entire stop to the motion of his horses, whilst
the equestrian hero presented himself by the
side of the royal coach, not in the form of
an highwayman to demand money from the
passengers, but with looks and voice so
mild,

mild, so insinuating, that had he asked for hearts, the most timid and guarded of Discretion's daughters (possessing such articles unoccupied), would have found it impossible not to have surrendered them.

"I beg your pardon, Madam," said the stranger, gazing on Loretta, but speaking to Miss Tillison, "for my presumption in stopping your carriage, that I might do myself the honour of enquiring whither you are going, and if towards Kingston, to warn you against the danger of venturing over the bridge, which this very day has been pronounced insufficient to bear the weight of such an equipage as your's."

"I thank you, Sir, very sincerely," replied the young lady, "for your intentional interposition between my safety and the risk which might have threatened it had I proposed going further than Lady St. Alban's, which

which I understand is not more than a mile, for there my excursion will terminate."

"Ah!" returned the graceful youth, "then how unfortunate am I to have the mortification of informing you, Madam, that chance is, on this occasion, so much the enemy of my mother, as to protract the happiness of receiving so charming a visitor. —She is gone to pass the whole day with a family whose residence is at the distance of twelve miles, and whither I was going, when my good or evil fortune, as you, Madam, shall condemn or pardon my intrusion, threw me in your way. But," continued he with impetuosity, "may I not have the honour of conveying your commands to my mother?"

Miss Tillison, on discovering it was no other than Lord St. Alban himself by whom she was addressed, betrayed that sort of modest timidity, which, without embar-

raising the thoughts, very much dignifies the air and expression of orators, especially female ones.

The confusion of Montgomery's daughter amounted to something more than timidity, whenever his Lordship's eyes were directed towards her, and she wished, without knowing why, that the conference was over, but for the gratification of this wish was destined to wait almost beyond the limits of her patience, being urged by prudence to fly a seducing object, the language of whose eyes adoring, but respectful, began to make her feel what she had never felt before. Yes, the humble Orphan of Snowdon had dared to look upon a peer of the realm with that sort of sentiment with which peers' daughters only should have beheld him! Yet let not the rage of these authorised descendants of nobility fall on the defenceless head of our poor little girl, as if she had been the wil-

ling

ling intruder on their prerogatives ; when, on the contrary, she was even unwilling to indulge her new-born softness at the expence of discretion, who, figuratively speaking, with one finger pointed to the heavens, with the other to the earth, to shew the distance between the condition of a peer and a peasant. Neither can it be even said that she was in love with Lord St. Alban : the partiality she felt would have been the due of any other man, whose character excited so much of her admiration before she had seen his person ; at least so fondly thought Loretta : and whilst she is persuading her conscience that nothing can be more just than this opinion, we will return to the question asked by his Lordship, “ May I not have the honour of conveying your commands to my mother ? ”

“ I know not,” replied Miss Tillison, with politeness equal to his own, “ how

to acquit myself of the obligation already incurred by your attention, my Lord, to our preservation; and now to accept your further services would be only to increase my debt."

His Lordship persisted; he said, he was a man who wanted to be put into office, and if she appointed him her ambassador, the restless spirit of his ambition would be appeased.

The Maid of Honour, convinced that such a champion was likely to insure the success of her father's application through her to Lady St. Alban, yielded to his friendly remonstrances; ordered the door to be opened, the step to be let down, and invited him to enter the carriage, which favour he accepted with avidity, seating himself opposite to Loretta, who nevertheless only came in for such sort of notice as
a blind

a blind evidence would never have been able to convict him.

The moment his Lordship understood to whom he was so desirous of being useful, he not only took the liberty of answering for his mother's coincidence with the wishes of Sir Philip, but, on the former neighbourhood of their two families, claimed to himself the privilege of an old acquaintance; and told Miss Tillison, before they separated, that he should shortly have the honour of attending his mother to solicit in town the renewal of that family friendship which had so happily begun in the country.

Lord St. Alban was more than exact to his word, for the very next day brought them both to the Maid of Honour's apartment, when the Countess most graciously acceded to the request of Sir Philip; and if all parties were not equally satisfied, it was

the fault of Loretta, who, so far from throwing herself in the way of attracting his Lordship's notice a second time, was shut up in her own room, and there would have remained till their visit ended, had her judgment been the sole umpire of her actions; but for these she was accountable to a superior, who, however condescending, was still her mistress.

Whilst Miss Tillison was entertaining her noble guest, a touch of the bell summoned the fearful girl's attendance. She sent the little Agnes as her substitute; it was only for a handkerchief; the same pretty messenger returned with it to her cousin, who giving her a kiss (to which was added one from each of her visitors), she bade her tell Loretta to bring out a picture of Sir Philip which hung in her bed-chamber; Lady St. Alban, on hearing she had one done by Sir Joshua Reynolds, having expressed a desire to see it.

Unable

Unable to dispense with this second command as she had ventured to do with the first, Loretta prepared to obey. By preparing to obey, I do not mean to say that she ran to the looking glass, adjusted her cap, or replaced it with one better adapted to the *toute ensemble* of her features. No:—the humble daughter of Montgomery thought of nothing but how to quell the rising perturbations, from which she could not refrain, on finding she must appear before Lord St. Alban himself, and the mother of Lord St. Alban.

If an abrupt start, and the burning blushes which succeeded each other, when his Lordship heard the name of Loretta first announced—if such symptoms are admitted evidences of the fact itself, then it may be accredited that Lord St. Alban's perturbations were at least equal to, if not surpassing, those troublesome ones experienced

rienced by the trembling Orphan of Snowdon.

The unlucky picture being produced, inspected, and declared a great likeness by the Countess, who had the politeness to say she perfectly remembered the countenance of Sir Philip, Miss Tillison ordered Loretta to carry it back, which she did with far greater avidity and pleasure than she had borne it thither.

Much admiration as Lady St. Alban expressed for the work of Sir Joshua, she felt at the sight of Loretta that the works of his great Master were infinitely more admirable ; but not having observed that her son was probably of the same opinion, the moment she had withdrawn, cried out—
“ Good God ! my dear Madam, I never saw any thing so handsome as your attendant. Pray, where did you meet with her ? ”

“ She

"She was recommended to my mother by Lady Acres, and I can with truth assure your Ladyship, that her modesty, prudence, and sweetness of temper is not at all inferior to the decided beauties of her person.

"I am glad to hear it," returned the Countess, "or I might have feared for the discretion of my son."

"Dear mother, what cause have I been so unhappy to give for these mortifying apprehensions on my account?" said his Lordship with a gay air under which he was trying to conceal unutterable emotions.

"I beg your pardon, St. Alban," she replied, "I never meant to lessen you in the esteem of Miss Tillison; and, to do you justice, she must allow me to declare that your conduct in every respect has made me the most fortunate of parents. But ob-

D 5

serve

serve, young man, that when a female plebeian so armed for conquest happens to be unprincipled, she is scarcely to be looked at with impunity by the gay and giddy."

"Ah! for Heaven's sake stop, Madam! Why you are making the matter still worse; should I venture *unchaperoned* to visit our agreeable new friend, her doors might be shut against me as one of the *gay giddy* tribe, unfit to be trusted with their own conduct."

Miss Tillison answered with politeness and good humour, that the established honour of Lord St. Alban, and the unblemished reputation of Loretta Montgomery, should be the vouchers for his welcome admission, and for her proper behaviour at all times.

"Loretta Montgomery!" cried St. Alban, with a look so complicated that there

was

was scarce a passion the ciphers of which were not stamped on it, and in a voice so solemn again repeated "Loretta Montgomery!" that the ladies, supposing him to be acting a part for their amusement, evinced, by joining in it, how much they were pleased with the drollery of his humour.—"We allow," said his mother, "that the name is in unison with the harmony of this little creature's beauty, and by the sympathy of your pronunciation I shall not be surprised should you throw it into composition, and expect hereafter that whenever you sit down to your harpsicord, Loretta Montgomery will be the only sound I shall be able to distinguish."

Instead of answering his mother, he looked at his watch. Immediately she had the goodness to comply with the hint this motion indicated, and after they were gone the Maid of Honour declared to her truly honourable attendant, that she thought the

character of Lady St. Alban was entirely misunderstood, and that what had been ascribed to her as overbearing haughtiness, was the graceful expression of a superior soul, and very superior understanding.

Loretta, long before her Lady's hour of rising, left her pillow of repose the next morning, (as she often used to do when the weather was fair) and stepping into the Park, where, with the chattering Agnes by her side, she enjoyed so many pleasant turns up and down the unpeopled mall, that at last fearing she had already infringed on her servile duties, she hastened her pace to regain the palace, but met in her way an interruption she did not expect. Just at the gates she was accosted by Lord St. Alban, who, addressing her with the same respect he would have observed in paying his compliments to a Dutchess, detained her a moment to enquire after her own and the health of Miss Tillison. Short as it was,
this

this interview gave her more pain than pleasure, and she resolved never again to indulge in solitary morning walks.

Agnes, ever playful, ran up stairs before her, and about the middle of them, Loretta, who was ascending with more caution, because more occupied in thought, heard the child say, "who is it, pray good woman you would speak with?" and hearing her own name announced by a voice which seemed familiar to her ear, she looked from whom it came, as of that she had no recollection, and only saw a decent dressed old woman, who told her, she had something to communicate which she would not be sorry to hear. Loretta desired, with great sweetness, that she would go away then, and return in an hour, when she should be at leisure, or else that she would wait in the servant's room, until her Lady was set down to breakfast, when, said she, I will come and take you to my own chamber.

The

The ancient dame, whose bonnet entirely concealed her countenance, chose the latter. Agnes undertook to shew her the way, and the daughter of Montgomery attended at the toilette of Miss Tillison.

Loretta frequently breakfasted with her young Lady, and was particularly invited to do so on this memorable morning, which she modestly declined, not pleading any made up excuse, but telling the truth, for in the purity of her mind there was no line between lies and prevarication, nor will such a difference ever be admitted in any bosom where the shadow has not entirely usurped the substance of right rectitude.

The Maid of Honor, hearing a woman waited to make some communication which Loretta seemed anxious to know, cheerfully dismissed her, and accepted the company of Agnes at the tea table in her stead, whilst she

she tripped away to give the audience eagerly looked for by the old woman.

"Miss," said the simple creature, "are you sure it is you your own self to whom I am going to disclose my business?"

"Very certain, Madam," she replied, smiling, "and my name is Loretta Montgomery."

"God bless Saint Taffy!" cried the dame, "how you are grown out of all knowledge!"

"Why have you ever seen me before, good woman?"

"Aye, many and many a time when you used to come and weep, and cry, and lament yourself over my poor dear *statute* like mistress."

Loretta

Loretta now recollected the face of her mother's attendant, flew into her arms, uttered a loud scream, and fainted on her bosom! A bottle of water standing near the terrified Welch matron, she caught it up and used it discretionally till she saw the blood revisit those lovely cheeks, lips, and nails, it had so abruptly forsaken, and heard her weakly articulate, "Does my mother live?"

"That she does, sweet Miss, and is as well taken care of as heart can wish."

"Thank God, thank God!" cried the affectionate girl, bursting into tears—"where is she?—Does she speak?—Does she move?—Will she know her child?—Will she acknowledge her own Loretta?"

"Will she know you, Miss? Why what should hinder her? She is as sensible as any Christian of speech; I am sure there is no
lack,

back, and as to moving, why she has not
at still ever since the Squire came to tell
her, poor dear soul! that it should go hard
but what he would find you out this morn-
ing, having heard say that you lived head
maid with one of the royal family. And so
it fell out just as the Squire said it would,
and he came with me and shewed me the
very stairs where I was to go up, and told
me what I was to say, and moreover beg-
ged, Miss, that you would make special
haste to go home to your mother."

"Oh, lead me to her! Dear good crea-
ture lead me to her!" exclaimed the half
frantic Orphan of Snowdon.—Then seem-
ing to recollect herself, "wait an instant,"
she added, and ran into her Lady's apart-
ment, who started with astonishment to see
the change which had taken place in her
appearance, but was still more confounded
when prostrate at her feet she intreated
permission to rejoin a long lost mother,
whom

whom God had restored, and to whom she was immediately summoned."

Miss Tillison raised, and strove to recompose her agitated attendant; but that being impossible in her present perturbed condition, she readily gave leave of absence, telling her the little Agnes should officiate for her during the time requisite for the arrangement of her affairs, and begged she would by no means hasten her return until it suited her convenience.

Luckily for Loretta she had not taken off her hat and cloak after coming from the Park, or she would certainly have ran through the inner courts without either, which would unavoidably have attracted a multitude of spectators, and might have given rise to a great deal of scandal, which no where flourishes so rapidly as in the precincts of royal palaces.

Out-

Out-stripping the very winds in swiftness, Loretta, borne on the pinions of filial duty, had almost passed the last guard, when Martha Watkins (by which name we are hereafter to recognize the tender nurse of Montgomery's unfortunate widow), not being able to keep pace with her fleetness, called out, desiring she would stop.

"Lack-a-daisy! Miss," cried she, panting for breath, "why, where would you go without me to shew you the way? Besides, I have a coach waiting just yonder, in which I rode here, and you are to ride home, for we have a good step before you will see your mother."

Being seated in the hackney coach, Loretta, as well as her impatience would permit, asked a thousand unconnected questions, which were answered in a manner altogether as unconnected; yet out of those *fly abroad* replies Loretta collected what

what we shall now relate for the information of our readers.

After the last tearful visit Loretta paid to the solitary cottage, in company with Mrs. Osinond, the poor maniac was observed by her keeper frequently to open her lips, as if speaking inwardly; and instead of sitting the whole day in one spot, and in one posture, she now wandered about from place to place, as if possessed with the very spirit of restlessness.

This sort of turbulence Martha observed was a worse trouble than the first, because she durst not lose sight of her for fear of mischief, and always locked her up in the parlour when obliged to go out for the little necessities of life.

Sir William Jones, when he first fixed them there, charged that none should be admitted, on any pretence whatever, into
The

the cottage, or even so near it as that the glance of curiosity might catch a glimpse of its blank but beautiful inhabitant, perhaps to penetrate the mystery of his crime, for it is the fate of guilt always to struggle with the torments of suspicion.

It was the dread of his father's displeasure which at first taught him the intricacies of caution, and when his father died, he neglected, or forgot, to enlarge the bounds of his former regulations, and Martha would submit to perpetual imprisonment rather than infringe on the orders of so generous a master.

The next alteration noticed by the careful attendant operating on the senses of her feeble charge was a certain fretfulness by day, and sleeplessness at night. She no longer mechanically eat what was set before her, but pushed every thing from her with
fullen

fullen displeasure, and when in bed wept, sighed, and moaned till the hour of rising.

She had continued in this uneasy state several weeks, when one day, being more quiet than usual, Martha, who had lately very much neglected her work in the garden, went out to dig, sow, and weed, leaving her patient in the parlour, unrestrained by lock or bolt. "What harm," thought she, "can happen, and I so near at hand?"

Deeply engaged in the culture of her vegetable family, she returned no more to the house till she thought it time to prepare dinner. In the whole, she thinks, she might have been employed something more than two hours, when, placing her skillet on the fire, washing her hands, and tying on a clean apron, she walked into the parlour, nor was much surprised to find the cage door open, and the bird flown. Supposing

finding her to have relapsed into one of her
raving fits, she looked for her in every
corner of the little cottage, but not seeing
her there, half distracted, ran back into
the garden, hoping she might have con-
cealed herself somewhere thereabouts.—
But alas! after the most diligent search, what
became of poor Martha, when this darling
charge was no where to be found!

She was every where at once—up the
lane—down the lane—racing round hedges—
looking into ditches—now wringing her
hands, and lamenting her own carelessness,
—now screaming for assistance—nobody
heard her voice, so nobody could come to
her assistance. “Oh!” cried the wretched
Martha, sinking down at the foot of a tree
by the lane side, “what account shall I
give of my stewardship when that great and
good Lady (meaning Mrs. Osmond) comes
to take her away? Or what shall I say to
my generous master?—She is as sure car-
ried

ried alive into heaven, as St. Taffy was a Welshman! But if I tell them so they will not believe me, because I did not happen to see it with my own eyes. Ah! woe is me! woe is me!"

A way-faring peasant, who just then entered the lane from the road, attracted by these bitter lamentations, ran till he came to the spot where she was sitting; and having heard her disastrous tale, said he had seen just such a woman as she described a little way out of Bristol, who was dressed all in white, with a handkerchief tied over her head; and that it struck him she must be out of her mind, because many people spoke to her, but she would not stop to make them an answer; flying on at such a rate, that, if she did not slacken her pace, the fleetest runner in Bristol would find it hard to overtake her.

"God

“ God be praised !” cried Martha, clapping her hands together, and starting up from the lap of earth ;—“ God be praised !—Old as I am, we will try that presently.”

The man offered to go back and put her into the right road, which she thankfully accepted ; telling him, if God did not reward him *she* would ; and, seeming to cast off the burden of her years, away they trotted together, first locking the door, and saying she would never open it again, unless it was to let in her lost angel.

Her conductor having brought Martha to the road which leads from Bristol to Bath, would have left her to proceed alone, but she besought him so piteously to go a little further, and let her lean on his arm, being ready to sink with fatigue, that he could not find in his heart to resist the impulse of compassion ; so he went a little further, and still a little further, stopping

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to ask every foot-passenger about the poor runaway. Some had seen her, others not; the last of whom said "Yes;" he had seen just such a person three miles further on—that she was sitting by the road side—that he spoke to her, but that she made him no answer.

"What shall we do now?" cried Martha, sobbing. "I can't walk three miles if it was ever so!"

An empty cart from Bristol came in sight, and her good-natured companion ran back to meet it, when finding it was going the right way, he asked the carter if he would give the old woman a cast, to which he readily assented. She mounted into it with joy—promised him a shilling for his kindness—rewarded her first guide with half-a-crown—and proceeded onward, transported with her good fortune.

"And

“ And now, Miss,” cried honest Martha, “ now comes the best of my story— for by then I got up to my poor, dear mistress, a fine gentleman—God bless him!— who was riding along in his own carriage, taking pity on her condition, he and his man were lifting her into it as carefully as they would have done a fucking baby !”

“ Bless him !—bless him heaven !” exclaimed Loretta, whose tears had not ceased to flow during Martha’s long harangue ; the sense of which we have connected together, but lopped off all superfluous roundabouts that rendered it almost unintelligible.

“ You need not, Miss,” said Martha, “ bless this good gentleman so soon, or what will you have to say, when I tell you that he carried us both to a doctor’s house, who presently cured your mother : besides, he came every day to see us ; and when my

E 2

mistress

mistress could speak, she told him, poor dear soul, that she had dreamed how her son Lewis and her daughter Loretta came to her, and an angel with them, who said they should come again."

"An angel, indeed!" cried Loretta.—
"It was our guardian angel!—It was Mrs. Osmond!"

"Why, so I told her, Miss," replied Martha, impatiently—"but you must not put me out so often, or I shall forget myself. Let me see—where am I—Oh,—
'Who said they should come again.' And then she dreamed that they did come again, and said as how they would go to London. So when I assured her it was no dream, but all as natural as life, nothing could pacify her but that she also must go to London. So what does I but tell the gentleman, next day, that he might as well wash a black-a-moor white as think

to

to do her any good, if she was not let to have her own way. And so, at last, her own way she had sure enough; for the squire (as I am sure he must be, though I never heard tell of his pedigree, only that his name is Arnold) gave me money to pay for a post-chaise all the way to London, for God knows I had left all mine behind me, in my tumults, and he sent his man a horse-back, to shew us to a lodging, and get another doctor for my mistress, all at his own expence; so that, by and by, she was as much in her right mind as the doctor himself, and would talk and weep for about former times, and about dear Snowdon, that it did my poor old heart good to hear her, because I loved the place, for though I did not live under the mountains, I could see the tops of them, and they seemed to me as natural as if they were my own relations.

“ Now don't speak, Miss. I see you are going to open your mouth ; but I han't done yet ; for when the squire came to London, and saw my mistress look deadly pale, and thin, and *rejected*, he said London did not agree with her, and so carried us away to Hampstead, where we have been only a fortnight ; and it was but last night that he come to tell your mother he had some news of you, and contrived how I should ride out to fetch you this morning. He also demeaned himself so desperately, that he rode by my side, poor old woman as I am !—brought me to the door of the King's palace, and shewed me the very stairs I was to go up. But, Lord help me ! what should I have done without a guide ?—for had any body else told me, that old tattered-down house was his Majesty's dwelling-place, I should have believed they were jeering, and so have gone, at last, without my errand's end.—Now, Miss,

you

you may speak, if you please, for I have done."

"One word more," cried Loretta, "before you are silent. Does this god-like Mr. Arnold often visit my adorable mother?"

"Why yes, Miss; we generally see him once or twice a week. He is quite a father to her, as a body may say; for though not ancient enough to be her father, he is always so glad when he finds her pretty well, and so sorry if she is mopish or melancholy, that for all the world he indulges her like a spoilt child."

By this time they were ascending the hill that leads to Hampstead, a road Loretta had never travelled before, when Martha directing her eye to an upper window, in a very decent-looking house, she there beheld, and knew again, at the first

glance, her restored but emaciated mother, anxiously looking out, as if to watch for their arrival.

Presently the coach stopped, and in another moment the mother and daughter were in the embraces of each other!

But, oh! reader—guess what was the condition of the latter, on finding that her arms enclosed only the breathless body of her parent!——She had fainted with excess of bliss——Excess of bliss recalled her to life——it was revived in her fleeting soul by the touch, the tears, the voice of Loretta!

The pale maternal cheek, faded by sickness, rested on the soft bosom of filial fondness! They pressed so close to the heart of each other, as seemed to say, no force shall ever divide us! For some moments neither uttered a syllable, but their looks were

were a thousand times more touching, more eloquent, than speech !

At last finding vent, it burst from the lips of the widowed parent, in these short expressions. “ Child of my love !—Child of my beloved husband !—my dead—dead Montgomery !” A pause, a terrible pause succeeded. Then again—“ My son !—your brother !—Poor, poor Lewis !”

“ He is well, dearest, dear mother !” said Loretta.

“ Enough !” cried she, with marked feebleness. “ I can at present support no additional weight to my felicity. I see my Loretta !—I hear from her that my Lewis is in existence ! Lead me—lead me—for I can bear *no* more !”

A servant (hired by order of their generous protector, to assist Martha in family
E 5 manage-

management, that the whole of her cares might devolve on her invalid mistress) was now summoned to attend. The widow of Montgomery was conveyed to bed, from the side of which if any motive in the world could have dragged the dutiful Loretta, it might have been found in the dread of offending her young Lady, who would infallibly expect her home before it was dark; yet she resolved not to leave her mother that night, at all events, therefore procured a messenger, by whom she sent a polite and humble note to the Maid of Honour, requesting that she might be permitted to remain at Hampstead till the next morning; to which, by return of the man who carried her petition, she received a verbal reply so much to her satisfaction, that she had nothing to disturb her thoughts the rest of that day and night, except the fears which she could not but entertain on the precarious state of her mother's health; even these fears gave way to hope, when she

she saw her in the course of a few hours not only able to sit up, but even to enter into the most interesting conversations with a degree of composure which her shattered nerves did not seem to promise.

The next day she had the happiness to find this dear parent so much better, that her repugnance to leave her for the short time necessity required very much lessened; and with a light heart she repaired to the Maid of Honour's apartment, to whom she unfolded her own situation, and that of her mother's, so far as did not involve in her communication any thing militating against the promise she had made to Lady Acres, never to quote her name, or that of her daughter's, on any occasion in which her *little* affairs were brought forward.

Notwithstanding the prohibition which precluded the fulness of confidence, Loretta told her artless tale with such graceful

ful simplicity, such lively energy, such impressive candour, as found a favourable passage to the very soul of her sympathizing mistress, who, so far from wishing to detain her from an immediate attendance on an invalid parent till she could suit her own convenience by engaging another servant, when Loretta offered to remain for that purpose, Miss Tillison absolutely refused.

“ No, my good Loretta,” said she, with tears in her eyes, “ if I were capable of exacting such a sacrifice from you, it would be an impeachment of those sentiments I feel for my own parents. Return, then, to your mother with my best wishes; and if all your care to preserve a life so precious should fail of success, or if she recovers, you should then desire a situation such as a superior duty now forces you to relinquish, be assured, the correct propriety of your conduct has entitled you to my patronage,

tronage, and to the protection of my family."

Loretta, penetrated with gratitude, expressed much, but felt infinitely more than she expressed, and soon hastened back to Hampstead, her little wardrobe considerably increased by the Maid of Honour's bounty, who condescended to salute her at parting; whilst many were the kisses she received in the tearful adieus of her engaging pupil Agnes.

Every moment appeared an age to the affectionate daughter of Montgomery until restored to the arms of her impassioned mother, whom she found not only risen from her bed, but dressed so exactly neat, and with so chearful a countenance, that Loretta could not, or would not, discover under the blaze of animated beauty those traces of fatal disease, which must have been

been extremely visible to any less interested observer.

“ My life !—my love !” said the fond parent, “ you are very good in coming back to me so soon. But must I lose you again !——Must you return to your miseries !”

“ No, dear mother, no ! Never, never more shall you lose sight of your happy Loretta ! Miss Tillison has the best heart, and the best parents, in the world. She judges of my situation by what her own would be on the same occasion, and has therefore dismissed me with marks of approbation, instead of displeasure.”

“ Ah ! beloved child !” cried she, with a smile of anguish, “ how gracious are the dispositions of Providence !—how just the Distributor of good and evil ! The wicked pull us down, but the righteous set us up !
One

One stranger despoiled!—other strangers have supported me!”

“Dearest mother,” interrupted Loretta, tears streaming down her cheeks, “these heart-rending subjects, I am sure, you cannot bear them now!—Oh! in pity to ourselves, let us forget the past, rejoice in the present, and hope in the future!”

“You are right, my love; some distant time will better assort with retrospection:—but there is no cause why we are to be silent on the present. Hadst thou come from town a little sooner, I could have shewn thee the most perfect of God’s works!—Such a being!—The unostentatious friend of mankind!—The preserver of thy mother!”

“Oh! for what vast sums of happiness,” cried Loretta, “am I his debtor!—Why, why was I not here to cast myself at
his

his feet—to testify my thankfulness—to expire in the sweet tumults of gratitude, at the knees of this heaven-directed saviour of my precious parent!”

“ If your emotions are so very strong, my child, before you have seen this wonderful man, the sensibility of your nature will make me tremble for your innocent affections when you do see him.”

“ Ah! dearest mother, you have nothing to fear on that account. I loved Sir William Jones, because he loved *you*, and because he is also the patron of our dear Lewis; and may I not love another with as much safety as I have done Sir William—I beg his pardon—I mean Lord Templevale? Surely I may!—and am so well convinced of my own strength, that I wish it could be put to the test this very moment.”

“ Well,

"Well, then," said her delighted mother, "my poor Loretta, your impatience will, I am sure, very soon be satisfied, for Mr. Arnold condescends to look in on the object of his benevolence always twice, sometimes thrice, a week. He came hither this morning on a new errand of mercy: he was anxious to know the state of my health, being doubtful how I might have sustained that almost insupportable weight of felicity he himself had heaped upon me, in bringing to my embraces a child so lost!—so found!—so amiable!—so very precious!"

Overcome with affection, their arms entwined—their bosoms met—their faces united—and, for the space of several minutes, joy had no other language than the eloquence of tears to evince its triumph!

Before this happy day closed on the happy pair, Loretta's mother made her repeat,
over

over and over, every transaction of a life short, but so eventful, that, though not given in strong colouring, it was often too much for the bearings of maternal fondness.

Many pauses in the pathetic tale became necessary, but these were filled up by expressions, from the agitated heart of Montgomery's widow, of exalted invocations to the beatified spirit of Mrs. Osmond, and big with blessings on the surviving friends of her darling children; amongst which number the name of Sir William Jones was often pronounced in such terms of exquisite gratitude, as, could that penitent soul have conceived, would have pierced it with daggers dipped in poison.

The newly recovered reason of Loretta's mother was unable to furnish one single transaction which had passed in the long blank of its desertion; neither, if she could
have

have brought her recollection to any point, would her tenderly fearful daughter have let her indulge in the dangerous retrospection.

The most pungently affecting parts of those soul-felt conversations reverted to the death of poor Montgomery; though Loretta softened every circumstance of the relation he made to his children before that unhappy event took place; yet it made so great an impression on the spirits of his deploring relic, that she went early to bed; when Loretta, stationed by her side, addressed letters severally to her brother, to Ireland, and to the Lodge, feeling her felicity incomplete till communicated to those dear friends, so linked to her affections by nature, friendship, and gratitude.

The variable and ever-turning wheel of life now throws up blanks, now indiscriminately casts up prizes; and the same fickle

kle destiny, which one moment presents the golden goblet sparkling with joy, is preparing for the next the black and bitter portion of misfortune.

Loretta saw only the restoration of her adored mother to the grand privilege of rational creatures, and to her society; but the hectic mantle which covered the advances of a foe, threatening the demolition of all her high-raised hopes of lasting happiness—that cruel disguise of glowing vermillion, under which lurked the pale tyrant *Death*—through that she did not discern. She looked forward to the establishment of perfect health as to an event no less certain than necessary to her own happiness, and the felicity of the equally affectionate Lewis.

The second day of her removal to Hampstead, as she sat by the bed-side of her mother, preparing her breakfast, a billet

let was delivered to her. "Here, Miss," cried Martha, in a low voice, her patient being still sleeping, and before she gave it to Loretta—"here is preferment for you!—This letter, which smells for all the world like a nosegay, comes from the good squire. His own man brought it, and says he must have an answer. So, Lord love you, do make haste, for this is none of your every day luck, you may be sure of that!"

"Ah!" replied Loretta, "what commands can the gracious preserver of my mother lay on her grateful daughter that it will not be my glory to obey? But first let me pay the homage due to supreme—to god-like humanity!—this good, this generous man! He will not see my blushes!"—and she pressed the unbroken seal to her lips.

"Suppose

“ Suppose he was to see them, Miss,” said Martha, “ what would be the harm of that ?—Why, he would only like you the better for it, I warrant ye—for a more modest gentleman my eyes never beheld. —My other master, who brought me out of Wales, God bless him, I did not mind half so much as I minded the squire ; nor used to quake and shake if he spoke to me, because as *he* always seemed a little wrong-headed, and *I* was in my right wits, why I thought we were more equal, as a body may say ; for if he was more richer, I was more solider. But the squire—if I did but look the squire in the face, I should be all over in a tremble, and turn as red as fire : and then I would beg his honour’s pardon ; and he would say, ‘ Modesty can never give *me* offence, Mrs. Martha :—take special care of your mistress, and you then are sure of my good word.’—No, it was not *word*, neither ; it was ‘ Mrs. Martha, take care of your mistress, and you may be certified

lified of my good opinion.'—No, no—one would think I was bewitched—it was not *certified*—but it was 'Mrs. Martha, take care of your mistress, and you may be certain of my good opinion.'

Whilst Martha was settling accounts with her memory, Loretta was very differently employed, in the contemplation of a note, the strange contents of which overwhelmed her with astonishment; and perhaps that was not the strongest expression of her heart, at least if the tears which flowed down her cheeks, and instantly dried up by conscious blushes, are admitted in evidence; then, indeed, astonishment was the least cause of her sudden confusion!—as she read what follows:

"When first I saw you, amiable Loretta, in the Maid of Honour's coach, your likeness to an afflicted female united to my heart by the ties of respectful sympathy,
struck

struck on my imagination with such force, that I believed it possible you might be her daughter. Perhaps I examined your countenance with a degree of attention, which nothing could excuse but the sincerest interest I had taken in the reinstatement of Mrs. Montgomery's peace, continually impaired by anxiety for the fate of a child so tenderly beloved.

“ My hopes were confirmed when I attended my mother to the apartment of Miss Tillison, where I had the good fortune to see you a second time, and to hear your name announced by that Lady; a name made familiar to me by the frequent repetition of an unhappy parent !

“ If the steps I have since taken to bring about the tender re-union, in which I find, by your mother's account, you have both been so exquisitely gratified ; if my respect for her, and for you, may entitle
me

me to a claim on the fair Loretta's gratitude, the only terms I shall presume to make for my own advantage is, that she will have the goodness to become my advocate, and plead for the pardon of a man who has dared to act with duplicity, by imposing his very limited services to Mrs. Montgomery, not under a feigned name, Arnold, being that of my family; but by veiling my real rank in obscurity. I feared, on the recovery of your mother's recollection, such a discovery might set me at a greater distance from that friendship with her, which it was my ambition to cultivate; for it is the misfortune of such local distinctions, to raise imaginary obstacles against mutual confidence, except the way is paved by equality.

“ Observe, madam, that I now address you in the character of my gentle counsellor, who is to speak for me at the bar of mercy; therefore, I must, in justice to my

cause, declare whatever is most likely to obtain a favourable sentence for a very penitent offender.

“ Know then, that besides my desire of engaging the kindness of your mother, unincumbered by ceremony, I had a second motive for the innocent deception.

“ It will be difficult for you to comprehend, that in the circles to which I am confined, he who dares to act contrary to the established customs of that circle, must prudently keep his eccentricities to himself, or become the subject of ridicule to his companions. This lesson experience had taught me before I was so happy as to render myself of use to Mrs. Montgomery; from her prudence I had nothing to fear; but the good loquacious Martha, who Squires me at every word, would most certainly have made my Lordship the subject of her discourse. This I endeavoured to avoid;

avoid; for pure as were the motives of my attachment to your still beautiful mother, there are young men who would have supposed they did me honour in giving a more selfish turn to the frequency of my visits to that respectable woman.

“ Adieu ! madam ; I wait with impatience for a passport to your presence, without it, I dare not approach the abode of happiness. I ask also for a little longer to be received as Arnold, whose past conduct shall answer for the future honour, esteem, and fidelity of

St. ALBAN.”

The feeble mother of Loretta, opened her eyes just as Loretta had a third time began to feast her's with lines of so rich an import, as seemed to pourtray in the mind of one man, and that one, Lord St. Alban, all the graces, all the virtues, that Nature ever brought in combination together.

“ My Loretta, my child,” said the anxious parent; “ does the letter you read with so much pleasure, so much avidity, ah! tell me, does it come from our dear Lewis ?”

Loretta started at the sound of her mother's voice, had an angel spoken from Heaven, she would not have heard it sooner or with greater surprise; so absorbed were her thoughts in one object, that every other above or below, seemed to be superseded. A moment's recollection convinced her, there existed another a thousand times dearer to her heart, than the noble, the fascinating St. Alban.

“ No: dearest mother; no,” cried she, kneeling by the bed, “ it is not from our Lewis, but it is next to Lewis, from the very best man in the world; it is from Lord St. Alban.”

“ And

“ And who, my love, is this Lord St. Alban, that engages so large a share of your approbation?”

“ He has preserved more than my life! He has preserved the life of my mother!”

“ When, Oh! when shall I know all my benefactors!”

“ Dearest mother, you already know him: that dear Mr. Arnold and Lord St. Alban are only disunited in name, one person answers for both; but hear what he says! Hear his own apologies! Then give me your commands how I am to answer him.”

The mother's astonishment was little inferior to what Loretta had before experienced. “ I am too weak to dictate,” said she, “ but if there are words to express our gratitude and our reverence, use them, my

love, in your immediate reply to Lord St. Alban."

Loretta flew to her desk, wrote two lines; they did not please, they were not sufficiently expressive—the paper was torn—another and another effort; feelings too strong, language too weak, retarded her endeavours so effectually, that probably she never would have completed the arduous undertaking, if Martha had not come up in a great bustle to ask for the letter, saying, the Squire's man was very impatient for the answer, that he might carry it back to his master. Loretta could have wept with vexation at her own incapability, but something must be said, and this it was.

"The humble objects of Lord St. Alban's bounty, can only assure his Lordship, that his commands shall be strictly obeyed, being too much indebted to the honour, rectitude,

rectitude, and generosity of their benefactor, to refuse his visit, under whatever appellation he may chuse to confer on them, so great a proof of his charitable condescension."

These few lines, sanctioned by the approbation of her mother, Loretta, in her haste, was sending away without a seal, or even direction; but Martha, the most collected of the two, asked if she would not please to clap on a bit of a wafer, and write the Squire's name on the back."

" Good God!" cried Loretta, " what was I about to have done! Run, dear Martha, bring me a lighted candle—a thousand thanks for putting me in mind of my error."

Away walked Martha, and Loretta having addressed her billet to — Arnold, Esq. began rummaging her pockets for something

thing to impress the wax with, drew out a little case that she always carried about her, waited anxiously the return of Martha; and having, with the end of this same case, sealed up the contents, urged the Welch matron to so much speed in the delivery of it to the messenger, that Martha could not help muttering to herself—Why, what's the matter now then! What makes Miss in such a flustration! I hope *Yhe* has kicked up no fanciful complaints against the Squire—God forbid! If he does not come here again, I shall go back to my own country, as sure as St. Taffy was a Welchman.

Mean time, Loretta began to renew those filial offices which Lord St. Alban's wonderful billet had interrupted. She filled out the tea for her mother, afterwards assisted at her toilette; led her into their little drawing-room, placed her on a sofa, and then sitting down by her side, embraced the emaciated hand of decaying Nature, whilst

whilst the pale, maternal cheek, rested on the lovely bosom, where reposed also the image of Lord St. Alban.

Such was their attitude, and of him were they speaking, when unattended, he rode up to the door, gave his horse to Martha, and stood before them with a countenance so illumined by virtue, so animated with pleasure, that poor Loretta, as she rose to receive with submission his graceful devours, almost staggered with confusion. Oh, how at that moment did she envy the composure of her mother! With a smile such as seraphs may be supposed to wear, when tuning their golden harps to the praises of All-creating Omnipotence, she held out her hand to Lord St. Alban, who had flown to prevent her getting up from the sofa, and softly whispered—"Oh! my dear Lord, I am a thousand, thousand times more indebted to you than ever."

“For Heaven’s sake, madam,” said he, respectfully lifting her offered hand to his lips; “forget the name of St. Alban, and remember that *Arnold*, distinguished by your favour, has at this moment no greater ambition, than to deserve the exalted situation in your affections, of another son! Of another Lewis! I make no claim of fraternal rights on the heart of your daughter. I would be your son, but not for worlds would I be the brother of Loretta!”

The ambiguity of this strange address, was not sufficiently understood by either of his humble *protégées*, to render them easy under a doubt that Loretta had some how or other incurred his displeasure. Her complexion varied from red to white, from white to red, her lips quivered, her eloquent eyes fell on her mother, and at last she said—“Oh! Sir, I must have offended you, but for the sake of this dear parent, forgive the offence I may have involuntarily

rily committed, unless so very great, as to surpass even the powers of generosity like your's to pardon."

"Fascinating girl! Did you not write me a letter this morning?"

"Yes, my Lord, but in obedience to your command I wrote it."

"Gentle creature, do not alarm yourself: I have been half distracted since that dear proof of your condescension reached me! Now tell me, I conjure you, with what did you make this impression?"—drawing her note from his pocket, and pointing to the seal.

Loretta a little re-assured by the decided kindness of his looks as well as words, produced a pencil case, saying, here is the seal I used, my Lord.

"I thought so," cried he; "I knew it must be so; it is the very same—You know not, Miss Montgomery, how dear this toy will be to its proper owner."

"Proper owner!" repeated the timid Loretta. "Oh! my Lord, do not injure me by suspicions, that I hold in my possession what any other person has a claim to; indeed, indeed it was given to me, and it is only valuable for the giver's sake! But if your Lordship has any acquaintance with him, and he desires to have it restored, I shall give it back to him with all my heart."

"*With all your heart!* Remember, sweet daughter of truth, when that heart is demanded as an appendage to this pencil case, you have promised to resign it; in the mean time, will you have the goodness to confide with me how, when, where, and on what occasion it came into your possession?"

"Notwith-

“ Notwithstanding,” replied Loretta, “ you are pleased to divert yourself, my Lord, with making riddles out of my plain meaning, I have no inclination to resist the commands of my mother’s most gracious preserver, most generous benefactor, and in that light, my own preserver, my own benefactor !”

“ Tenderly excruciating creature !” exclaimed his Lordship ; “ by feeding my vanity, you starve my curiosity : have you been long the possessor of this bauble ?”

“ I was only seven years old, my Lord, when a little boy bid me keep it in remembrance of him.”

“ And what had you done for this fortunate boy ? You must have extremely obliged him, that from the time of your accidental meeting, you have held the first place, not
only

only in his recollection but in his affections !”

Loretta's face was instantaneously covered with blushes ; it was the effusion of visionary suggestions, which vanished together with her half-formed hope, on Lord St. Alban adding, with peculiar eagerness, “ I well know this acquaintance of your's, Miss Montgomery ; there is no thought of his heart which he hides from me. What tender representations does he constantly make to my feelings, of the two beautiful children who forced a loan on his acceptance ! How warmly does memory count the sorrows it cost him, when going the next day to an interview agreed upon by his dear, liberal little friends, he saw them not ! Was he telling you this circumstance himself, he would be unable to describe the chagrin with which he turned from the appointed spot where he had expected to find them !

them ! How, then, shall I attempt it ?— Yet I know that he frequently went thither in pursuit of the fugitives, and was as often disappointed. I know, too, the bitter tears he let fall, when carried from the Wells, without being able to recover his lost treasures, or even to hear what was become of them !”

“ Alas ! my Lord,” replied Loretta, “ our want of punctuality proceeded not from the fault of Lewis or me. We were the children of Providence, and by devious ways our unerring guide was that moment conducting us to the arms of a merciful benefactress, and by her means to those of a lost, a beloved parent ! The road to so much bliss was rugged, even dangerous ; and the first unpleasant step was that which hurried us from Bristol before we could have it in our power to take leave of the young gentleman who had condescended to honour us with his notice.”

“ Divine

“ Divine Loretta ! will you honour him *now*, through me, with your commands ? — Will you send to his faithful heart a gracious message ? Will you — ! ”

“ Oh ! my Lord,” interrupting him hastily, “ do not sport with my unassuming pretensions or your dignity ! *Your* good-nature may prompt you to convey what *my* prudence would never permit me to send. — I feel myself obliged to his recollection, but can be no further interested for a person I should not even know were any accident to throw me in his way ; which your Lordship, I hope, will not take very ill, if I say shall ever be my endeavour to avoid.”

“ God forbid ! ” cried Lord St. Alban. “ I shall not see you to-morrow, but you shall hear from me ! ”

He

He pronounced these words trembling—agitated—confused! Then, as if unknowing what he did, threw his arms round Mrs. Montgomery—imprinted a filial kiss on her forehead—saying, “Love me—love me, dear mother, as you used to do!”——stamped a more fervent one on the delicate hand of Loretta—ran out of the room—relieved Martha from her office of groom—mounted his horse, and galloped towards London.

The first moments after these strange hasty adieus, passed in expressive silence—the eyes of mother and daughter eloquently asking of each other what these portentous adieus could possibly mean? The same question at length travelled to their tongues, and both exclaimed at the same time—“What can be the matter with Lord St. Alban?”

“I never

" I never saw him act so inconsistently before," said Mrs. Montgomery.

" Indeed, my dear mother, I think his Lordship extremely unaccountable !"

" But don't you also think it possible he may be that very same kind-hearted boy who gave you the pencil case ?"

" I--I--I-- did—I believe—I thought—once I did think———"

" Why so confused—why so unconnected, my love ? Should you be sorry, if what I have only surmised happened to be founded in reality ?"

" Sorry !—why should I be sorry, dearest mother ? I am only frightened lest he should think I came dishonestly by that unfortunate pencil case."

" My

“ My child, he cannot, he does not, harbour such an idea. He knows how it came into your possession. No circumstance of that little incident seems new to him. He calls the youth from whom you received it his friend. A good man is always his own friend ; and I am persuaded this friend is no other than himself.”

“ Oh ! if it should be so ! Once I fancied I could trace in his noble countenance the features, the air, the smile, of this unlucky boy !”

“ Why unlucky, my dear ?”

“ Oh ! mother ! could any thing be more unlucky, than that I should never again behold the face of Lord St. Alban !—Never, never—after what he has said—can I look up to him—can I speak to him—can I even breathe in his presence—if—”

Here

Here she was interrupted by Martha, who, sitting down as she had always been permitted to do, began to enquire of Loretta how she liked the squire, and to run out in his praises with such volubility as gave her no opportunity of answering, had she been inclined to do so. "See, Madam—see, Miss," cried Martha, shewing them a guinea, "he gave me this before he clapped spurs to his horse, only for holding the bridle a quarter of an hour, or thereabouts. Surely, the Prince of Wales himself could not have behaved more grander.—‘Mrs. Martha,’ said he, mounting his horse like an angel of light, ‘Mrs. Martha, take care of your respectable Mistress, and of her amiable daughter;’ meaning you, Miss. That your Honour may depend on, says I, curtesying down to the ground; and I hope, squire, you like Miss as well as you do my Mistress."

"Good

“ Good God, Martha !” cried the daughter of Montgomery, blushing like crimson, “ how could you be so imprudent !”

“ Lord love you, Miss, where is the imprudence of asking a civil question ?— But, I suppose, his Honour, too, was as nice as yourself; for though you colour pretty well for a lady, the red in your cheeks is no more to compare with his, when I hoped you was agreeable to his Honour, than the ribbon in your cap is to be compared to my scarlet cloak !

“ But, Lord help us ! my poor, dear mistress has not yet had her sip of chocolate, and here I am chattering like Mother Midnight’s magpie !”

Martha disappeared——returned again with rusks and chocolate; and the rest of the day was passed in sometimes speaking, but oftener thinking, on the most generous

rous, at the same time the most inexplicable, of mankind !

The words—*I shall not see you to-morrow, but you shall hear from me*—so emphatically pronounced at parting by Lord St. Alban, were the last that memory resigned to sleep, and the first it re-assumed at waking.

Loretta counted the striking clock with inexpressible anxiety—eight—nine—ten—eleven—and no letter or message from Lord St. Alban. “ He thinks us unworthy, or has forgotten us, dear mother !” said the agitated girl.

The expression had scarcely escaped her lips, when Martha entered with a letter, which she said was brought by a porter ;—then returned to her domestic employment, having no suspicion that it came from her favourite squire, because it was not delivered by his servant.

The

The packet was addressed to Mrs. Montgomery. Loretta's eye first glanced on the seal; but what was her surprise to find it exactly the same with her own. "Good heaven!" cried she, "my Lord has certainly taken away my pencil-case!" She searched her pocket—it was there!—"How is this!—how is it possible that I should have it—and that Lord St. Alban should seal with it!" They curiously examined both together; but neither Loretta or her mother could perceive the smallest difference. It was a cipher, consisting of double initials—*MA IA*—encircled in a heart.

These seals appeared a perfect enigma, and there was no chance of arriving at the solution, but by breaking one of them.—This task was performed by Mrs. Montgomery, whilst Loretta, stationed at the back of her sofa, devoured, with eyes swimming with delight, the dear contents, but much
more

more rapidly than her equally delighted mother, who fondly dwelt on every line—every word—almost every syllable; sometimes stopping to wipe a tear of joy from her pale cheek, sometimes to turn her eyes back on her glowing lovely daughter, fraught with the sweetest maternal congratulation. Had either attempted to speak, the effort would have been in vain. They had eyes to see, they had hearts to feel—but, they had no ears to hear, or tongues to speak, till they had finished the whole of the following epistle :

“ I have so much to say, in addressing a respectable parent on the subject of a daughter, whose best praise is, her being worthy of such a mother. I have so much to propose, so much to request, that I borrow from sleep, those hours dedicated to the repose of my soul ! Yes, Madam, my soul, since I last saw you, has been in tumults, which nothing could appease, until
the

the whole of its complicated contents are opened to your generous inspection !

“ I adore your daughter ! The likeness she bears to yourself first engaged my attention. My first look was the effect of curiosity, but the second has been fatal to my peace. Who shall twice behold the beautiful Loretta with impunity ? Torn and distracted by the kindling of a new-born passion—a passion I had never before experienced—a passion, which in its very birth promised nothing but misfortune !—the dependant state of its object being but too visible, from her situation in Miss Til-lison’s carriage.

“ Desperate as was this circumstance to my fairest hopes—the soul of virtue, as well as the soul of beauty, which animated the features of my irresistible enslaver, forbidding every approach to her heart but by the road of honour—all that I could dare to

indulge of happiness was, if possible to see her once more.

“ I found a pretence to visit Miss Tillison, accompanied by my mother. Fortune out-stripped my expectations—I saw the fascinating mistress of my wishes. I saw my mother almost as much influenced by the inexpressible sweetness of her graceful demeanour, as was her son with the united ones of beauty, truth, and modesty. Lady St. Alban felt my danger; she expressed, with good-humour, her fears for my heart; she expressed them too late. I had no heart to lose—it had already fled to the bosom of an enchantress.

“ Your daughter left the room—the light of heaven seemed to retire with her—all, in my mind, was chaos, darkness, and confusion! To marry the servant of Miss Tillison was impossible! Not to love her was still more impossible!—and to injure her

her, a devil only could have suggested—and none but a devil dared to have executed.

“ I reveal to you, Madam, the inmost recesses of my thoughts, that you may fully understand what were my emotions of joy, when Miss Tillison accidentally pronounced the name *Loretta Montgomery*! This dear name, by which I not only recognised your daughter, but knew, from the confidence you had reposed in me, that her birth could raise no essential, at least no insurmountable, bar to a union, on which, from that moment, my felicity depended.

“ I need not repeat by what *private* ways I brought Loretta to your arms. I could adopt no other—concealment for the present being absolutely necessary to the success of my undertaking.

“ My next step was to ascertain the condition and immediate circumstances of that treacherous brother, who so basely defrauded your husband and children of their inheritance. I dispatched a professional man to his seat in ———shire, to make the requisite enquiries, and afterwards paid you a short visit, having first informed myself your daughter was gone back to the palace, prior to the resignation of her degrading situation there.

“ My motive for wishing to *avoid* the being, for whom I would have encountered all sorts of personal dangers to *meet*, were honest, if not polite. I durst not approach her as a lover until the half-formed projects, raised by hope, had assumed more method than any by which I had been able to regulate them ; and as to seeing her under the mask of indifference, my heart told me it was not equal to the trial.

“ Have

“ Have patience, Madam. I have said much already, yet much more remains to be said. It is not merely the history of my actions, but the history of my thoughts, that am I composing; and the thoughts of man are too discursive for rational limitation.

I gave myself more credit for the good government of my passions than, in reality, I deserved. I purposed to wait the return of my messenger from Montgomery Park; but when, on the second morning, he did not arrive, I wrote that letter to your daughter, confessing the duplicity with which I had acted towards you, and received from her your kind permission to make my own apologies; but before I opened her precious billet I cast my eyes on the seal, which produced a discovery fraught with joy, amounting to extacy:—it was the very same that, when a boy, I had given to the most lovely, the most generous, the most pathetic

tic child in the world. The counterpart is still in my possession. To compliment my mother, I ordered the toys with an engraving of our initials united in a heart, by way of a seal, thinking to agreeably surprise her with a present she did not expect.

“ (At that time my father had not succeeded to the title, my grandfather being still living. He was then only a baron; the earldom is of a later creation; and in point of antiquity I find your family more ancient than my own.)

“ But after I had forced one of them on the acceptance of Miss Montgomery, I made no mention of the other to my mother, but kept it more for the sake of that divine girl, who retained its companion, than from selfish motives. My voucher for the truth of this strange accident is borne on the impression of this packet;—the voucher of my love she must have perceived

ceived in that state of unconnected transport with which I questioned her how she came by the precious relique, without daring to trust myself further on a subject, where I might have said too much before I was entitled, by circumstances, to say any thing.

“ The lawyer I dispatched to Montgomery Park came back this night, and at a late hour. The intelligence he brings is not calculated to raise our hopes, neither should it increase our fears ; for although he might squander his property, the claims of his brother's children to gentility he cannot efface ; nor can *his* vices tarnish *their* virtues. My God ! what bright visions of happiness do I build on this firm foundation !

“ The two thousand a year, one moiety of which he retained by the treachery exerted against a too easy, a too amiable brother,

ther, has been lavished in the service of his infernal master. Women, parasites, drinking, gaming, and every other species of shameful prostitution of human faculties, has driven him from his elegant home to take refuge in the verge of the court; nor can he ever be liberated from thence, as his debts are enormous. His estates are all sold, with the reservation of one hundred a year to prolong his miserable existence, but which he is trying to shorten by the most pernicious excesses, and a continual state of inebriety.

“ Now, my dearest Madam, with hope, fear, and submission, I throw myself on your mercy—my fate is in your hands—you only can exalt me to happiness—you only can consign me to misery. Hear, and decide. But, oh! if my life is dear to you, decide in the favour of a strong but innocent passion, which has no friend, if
you

you refuse to become one; yet, however opposed, never, never to be conquered.

“ Whilst I feel myself the most passionate of lovers, I also feel that I should not deserve such a mother as yourself; for such is my mother, if I was not the most dutiful of sons, a sentiment so deeply rooted in my soul, that rather than make her unhappy, I would be miserable myself!

“ I do not insult your judgment, I do not disgrace my affection for your daughter by this preference. You, my second mother, will approve the preservation of those duties, to which at this moment you are indebted for some of the sweetest transports your maternal bosom ever experienced. And Loretto, allow me to call her my Loretta, should I have the honour to obtain her partiality, will find in the exactitude of filial duties, the best security for the discharge of those dearer ones, she may

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expect

expect from the husband who will adore her for ever.

“ Lady St. Alban, though exemplary in her domestic character, has nevertheless so decided a predilection for splendid rank, that her views for my establishment are very different from those I now entertain, and ever will support. I must conquer her prejudices, but I will conquer them by patient respect, not by turbulent opposition.

“ Do you think, madam, I can carry these resolutions into execution, without your assistance? No, indeed, I will not attempt it. To live in perpetual banishment, is impossible. I must sometimes see your daughter, but never without your permission, and in your presence.

“ Is it not my interest to preserve immaculate that delicacy of character, in whose keeping must one day, God grant, no distant

tant one, be deposited my honour, and the honour of my family? I only desire, till it is in my power to unite our destinies with the consent of my mother, to be received with no tenderer distinction than that of your son, and the *brother* of Loretta. Even these restricted interviews I cannot be indulged with, situated as you are at present.

“ Lady St. Alban has a particular friend who lives near you, whom she has promised to visit soon, and to remain with her some weeks. My mother having unfortunately once seen my Loretta, were she to see her again before all my plans to obtain her concurrence are properly arranged, my prospects of happiness will retreat to such a frightful distance, that I shall despair of overtaking them.

“ In consideration of my ungovernable fears, aid me to avoid this threatening misfortune ;

fortune ; consent with your beautiful daughter to remove your lodgings—condescend to occupy a small house which I presumed this very day to engage for your accommodation. Your carriage will attend to convey you thither at ten o'clock to-morrow morning. I do not ask your acquiescence, because I know you will not doom me to the slow death of torturing disappointment.

“ Dearest mother, dearest sister, adieu ! We shall meet to-morrow. Once more, adieu !—One thing I have omitted, and am glad to recal any circumstance to lengthen the pleasant moments of addressing the dear objects of my thoughts, of my attention.

“ Your little domestic establishment, in the number and use of which I have consulted your humility more than my own ambition, are waiting to receive the commands

mands of their amiable mistress. At her new residence, Martha, if you please, may also attend you; but as in my future visits, having no motive for concealment, I shall appear in my proper character, I fear the worthy creature will, in the fulness of her talk, make such observations as might awaken vulgar curiosity. This may be avoided, if you have the goodness to put it to her own option, whether she will go with you, or return to her native Wales?

“ I think from what has passed between us in our short accidental *tete-à-tetes*, that nothing but her attachment to yourself, would occasion any preference for what she calls an *out-landish* country; and that now her services may be dispensed with, she will not hesitate to make her election in favour of national prejudice; in the full persuasion that there her choice will rest, I have taken the liberty to send a check on my banker, as a reward
for

for her fidelity to the parent of my love; and to render that choice comfortable, I shall trouble you, dearest madam, to present it in your own name. I sign the check only *A*, of which the banker is informed, so that no difficulty will arise when she presents it for payment."

I should hold it a great insult not on the understanding, but the generosity, even the delicacy of my readers, did I conceive it necessary to declare in words, straight forwards, with what joy Lord St. Alban's petition was gratified by the amiable Widow and fascinating Orphan of Montgomery. It would be a tacit confession, that I thought it possible amongst the fairest of that class, there may be some so cold hearted, as to be incapable of feeling like them, the exalted gratitude, the noble confidence by which they were actuated whilst preparing to put themselves in readiness to meet his wishes.

As

As directed by his Lordship, Martha was left to decide her own fate; and as he had surmised, so she chose to return from whence she came.

Charmed with the supposed bounty of Mrs. Montgomery—richer than her whole kindred put together—longing to expose to the view of her relations, this wonderful superiority—burning with impatience to purchase the little cottage which she only rented when Sir William Jones decoyed her away, she had nothing in the world to regret, but the bidding an everlasting farewell to her tenderly beloved patient, to whose critical state of health, since the recovery of her senses, especially from her newly revived spirits, she was as blind as Loretta herself: Alas! it was affection that blinded Loretta; but ignorance hoodwinked the more experienced Martha.

Martha's

Martha's separation from her dear patient, was mutually painful, mutually tender.

Martha designed to remain two days at the old lodgings, to put her weighty affairs *en train*, her plan being to go on the third, to the inn in London, from whence the stages set out for Wales, to take a place in one of them; to wait on the banker, and to receive two hundred pounds; Lord St. Alban having given a check for that considerable sum, not only that in future she might live at her ease, but perhaps as an inducement to her more ready election.

A neat, unornamented post-chaise, a pair of handsome horses, the postillion and one riding servant, their coats dark brown, the same colour as the carriage, arrived at Hampstead, with exactness to the time appointed,

pointed, by the most humane of mankind, the most munificent of lovers.

Loretta threw herself on the bosom of her mother—"Oh!" cried she, "what will become of your too, too happy child, should death, or a more deserving woman snatch from me."—She was interrupted by Martha blubbering and crying, now that the moment of parting was come, to say as well as sobs would allow her to say, that the baggage was all placed before and behind, and that the servants waited to receive further orders.

The ladies affectionately embraced the weeping, faithful domestic, and even mingled their tears with her's.

"I have no orders to give," said the mother of Loretta. "God bless you, my dear good Martha! God bless you, dear, good Martha!" echoed the pathetic Orphan of Snowdon;

Snowdon; and then assisted the feeble steps of Mrs. Montgomery, first to descend the stairs, afterwards to ascend the carriage, intreating that it might go very gently, till she saw how her mother would be able to bear a more rapid motion.

At an easy pace, they arrived in two hours and a half, at a small but elegant house, on the Streatham road, not more than a mile from that pleasant village, placed in the center of a large garden, laid out at once for use and beauty.

They entered a commodious parlour, where every thing was prepared for dinner in a stile of rich simplicity, which engaged the admiration of Mrs. Montgomery, but poor Loretta's attention was less pleasingly engrossed; she saw every thing in which even luxury might have delighted, but she saw not Lord St. Alban! She saw plates of the finest china, knives and forks of the purest

purest silver, but she saw only enough laid on the table for two; she saw no preparation for the dear guest she had been taught to expect, and sighed at meeting a disappointment which she durst not express.

An elderly woman of respectable appearance, evinced that she acted in the capacity of housekeeper, by presenting refreshments, and hoping her Lady would find the regulation of her family affairs to her satisfaction. She also introduced a younger person than herself, extremely diffident, whose beauty was the least of her endowments, being remarkably plain featured. "And this, Madam," said she, "is a very good girl, whom I have hired in consequence of your commands conveyed to me by your acquaintance, Lord St. Alban, to whom I am also obliged for my own recommendation to your service. She is sober, industrious, and knows every branch of her business, having lived as Lady's maid seven

seven years in one family. I am sure she must be happy to have so charming mistress as your daughter ; and Miss Montgomery, I flatter myself, will find her humble and useful. Your cook, house-maid, footman, and gardener, Madam," continued she, "are also honest people."

The eyes of Loretta, sweetly expressive, turned on the mother, as if they would have said—Good God ! What an angel is this Lord St. Alban ! Twice or thrice she assayed to speak, to ask if they were not to expect the pleasure of returning their thanks to his Lordship before the day closed, for all the trouble they must have occasioned him ; yet conscious the question would not merely proceed from gratitude, she had no courage to announce it, but sat down to dinner with what appetite she could ; Mrs. Montgomery having first declared herself perfectly satisfied with all the representations made to her by the house-keeper, who,

who, she understood, was also appointed to the station of her personal attendant.

Nothing did they eat, nothing could they say, they could only look on each other, till the same man who rode with the carriage, and afterwards waited at table, having performed his official duty, quitted the room.

Then their joyfully oppressed hearts found vent in the softest, sweetest tears, gratitude ever shed; and then Loretta exclaimed—"Had Lord St. Alban, instead of the most amiable man in the world, been a monster of personal deformity, yet I must have loved him for his goodness to my dearest, dear mother, for his thousand thousand unequalled virtues!

What was at first silent admiration, now took the form of eloquent expression; yet something seemed wanting to complete

pleat the felicity of Loretta, which something could only be supplied by the presence of Lord St. Alban.

Having placed her beauteous, but languid parent on a sofa, and darkened the windows, that she might enjoy unbroken rest after her late fatigue, she softly slid out of the room to visit the other apartments; wandering over each with inexpressible delight, because at every step she was presented with some new memento of her lover's taste and liberality.

Her scrutiny terminated in a dressing-room so highly ornamented, that it might have appeared to be fitted up for a princess. But what most engaged her attention, was a small mother-of-pearl cabinet, the face of which, curiously inlaid with gold, she examined a long time before she discovered that it had drawers, when pulling out one of them, the first thing on
which

which she cast her eyes, was a sealed paper, it was directed to Mrs. Montgomery, and contained something hard in its folds. She knew the writing on the superscription, and would have immediately flown with it to her mother, but her mother slept; and great as was her impatience, the fear of prematurely disturbing her was still greater. She therefore took it with her back to the dining-room, where softly sitting down, she fondly watched the maternal pillow of repose, till opening her placid eyes, Mrs. Montgomery declared herself very much refreshed, when, with a filial kiss, the anxious Loretta gave up the treasured letter, together with a short account by what accident it came into her possession. And these were the contents.

“ I banish myself from the presence of a beloved mother and sister, not for an hour or a day, but according to my calculation, for years, for ages, for an eternity ! I shall
see

see you no more for one, two, it is possible three weeks ! I am going out of town on business of the utmost importance, to the completion of my own, may I not presume to add, of our mutual happiness. What other business would be of moment enough to detain the grateful St. Alban from the presence of what is dearer to him than life ?

“ I feel the weight of my obligations, for the noble confidence you repose in my honour ; I feel it heightened by your condescending to occupy a cottage of my recommending ; the measure of benefits conferred by you, and the adorable copy of your beauties, virtues, and excellencies, will not only be full, but run over, if you have the goodness to apply the enclosed key to the top of the small cabinet, and to your own use the contents there deposited.

“ You

“ You who have granted me so much, will not refuse to grant me a little more. I request that your health, so valuable to your children, and to him who has the ambition of hoping to be ranked with them in your heart, may not, in my absence, be neglected or lightly treated ; the physician who attended you at Hampstead, I do not wish to visit you at Streatham ; I have a better opinion of Doctor H——, and hope you will have the goodness to consult him, for my sake ; but for the execution of this last commission, I depend more on filial affection than self-preservation. You may, Loretta will not, be negligent in sending for Doctor H—. Pray let him see you the morning after your arrival ; and tell your charming daughter, that, when we meet, she shall receive for her obedience the warmest thanks of her thrice happy, and devoted,

“ ST. ALBAN.”

“What shall we ever do, my love,” cried the enraptured mother, “to testify our gratitude?”

“Ah! my dearest mother, why do you ask that question of your transported Loretta? What can I do, but to love him all the days of my life with as much tenderness as I love you, and to obey him in every thing as I would obey you? I begin with the first command I have had the honour to receive from him; and immediately she wrote a note to Doctor H—, which she sent to town that evening; and the next morning he made them a visit.—He did not say to Loretta, that he thought this beloved parent dangerously ill, because he found it impossible prematurely to afflict a young creature, so lovely in her person, so lively in her affections, when death might yet be at a considerable distance; for although he saw the certain consequence of his patient’s disease, her decline might be
of

of that lingering description, to which no particular period for its termination could be affixed. He contented himself with prescribing asses' milk, much air, and moderate exercise, from which (and no drugs being mentioned) the poor Loretta, happily for her present ease, was cheated into absolute security, and now seemed more anxious than ever for the arrival of Lord St. Alban, that she might convey to him what she fancied to be the doctor's favourable opinion of his interesting patient.

She rewarded the friendly physician with liberality equal to the pleasure a mistaken imagination had conducted to her heart; and for this liberality she was amply provided by the unbounded generosity of their noble benefactor, who had placed more gold in the little cabinet than Loretta had ever seen at one time, even in the possession of Mrs. Osmond.

Occupied in never-ceasing attention to the ease and restoration of an adored parent, the first days of their residence at Streatham were passed by the dutious Orphan of Snowdon almost imperceptibly.— Every day diminished the strength of her mother; yet, strange as it may appear, every day strengthened her own hopes of a speedy renovation of those bodily organs, which unheard-of misfortunes, and mental derangement, had very naturally impaired.

Doctor H— having desired that Loretta might not sleep in the same bed with her mother, she caused another to be put up by its side: attentively watched her by night, dressed her in the morning, read to her as she sat in the parlour, supported her as she walked in the garden, and twice in the day attended her in short airings round the pleasant environs of Streatham, or on the London road, perhaps with the hope that chance might exhilarate the longed-for
inter-

interview with Lord St. Alban; and a chance meeting seemed much less formidable to her diffident humility, than to receive him for the first time under his own roof. But her wishes were not to be gratified by the lucky rencounter; and on the tenth day his Lordship entered the dining parlour a few minutes before their dinner hour.

Loretta, perhaps, from some secret *presentiment*, had taken unusual pains at her toilet, though only the work of a few moments. Her mother had already pressed to her overjoyed heart that gracious being to whom she stood indebted, next to the Almighty himself, for the comforts, the joys, the blessings of life; and, most of all, for the restoration of those senses, without which she would never have been able to enjoy them.

Loretta, who had not been told that this fondly expected guest was already in the house, heard from the chamber above, her mother speaking to somebody below, in a tone of voice rather varied, and unusually animated. Supposing it to be Doctor H—, she ran down stairs to pay him her compliments, and report all she had done relative to the precious charge confided to her nursing; but on opening the door, and, instead of the doctor, beholding Lord St. Alban, she gave a faint scream, clasped her hands together, rushed forward, cast herself at his feet, and struggling with complicated emotions, too big for utterance, would have there fainted, but for the activity of her lover, who, kneeling by his soul's charmer, supported her in his arms, and pressed her to his bosom.

Awakened to recollection by a freedom, which never man had dared before to usurp,
her

her pale cheeks again put on the chaste but glowing livery of genuine modesty. She shrunk from his embrace, abashed, confounded; then with a look sweetly beseeching, yet full of dignity——“Despise not the creature of your bounty, my Lord,” said she: “I meant to testify my gratitude, but fear I have erred in its expression!”

A very rapturous scene ensued on the part of Lord St. Alban. Soft, timid, tender returns, under the guardianship of delicate apprehension, were sparingly, yet fully to his Lordship's satisfaction, extracted on the part of Loretta.

But if poor a author were forced to write, verbatim, all that is commonly said on such occasions, his labours would be endless, and the fruits of it unprofitable; for, after all, neither his hero or his heroine can be the rage, because every reader, whether

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man,

man, boy, woman, or girl, will think they should personally have made a much better figure in love pages than any that can be entered there by the pen of fiction; and the only way to disappoint such partial critics, is, never to detail the flowery language of two passionate lovers; for where there is no exemplification there can be no comparison, either to the disgrace of the author, or to the disadvantage of the reader.

Dinner being over, and the servant withdrawn, Lord St. Alban asked his two fair friends, how they liked their situation?

"Nothing could be more charming!" Mrs. Montgomery replied.

Oh! nothing, indeed, *thought* Loretta, can be half so charming as it is at this moment! Yet a wilderness would be as delightful,

lightful, if enlivened by the residence of Lord St. Alban !

It was but a thought !—yet it covered her beautiful face with blushes !

“ But my dear mother,” continued his Lordship, “ if another situation still more eligible should present itself, would you feel very reluctant to make an exchange ?”

“ Best and most respected of men !” cried the agitated mother of Loretta, holding out her emaciated hand to touch his, her eyes filling with tears “ with what new obligations are you going to oppress us ?—Take care, my Lord, that the spirits you would exhilarate are not crushed by a too weighty burden of unmerited kindness !—It is hard, even from a benefactor like you, to be always receiving——never able to repay !”

“ When a man acts well, from disinterested motives,” he replied, “ then, indeed, he may be entitled to approbation; but I, who am confessedly the most selfish of human beings (flily casting a glance on Loretta), am hurt by the credit with which it is your goodness to invest me. Whatever I have done, whatever I may do, I have my reward in view. It was to serve my own ends that my soul and body have been so many days divided !—

(They understood his meaning : Mrs. Montgomery smiled, and Loretta’s eyes would have joined her heart in a dance, if she had not restrained their motions.)

“ The morning preceding that when I hoped to have been my own ambassador, and brought my congratulatory compliments on your arrival at this favoured cottage, I heard, by accident, some part of an estate which it suited me to purchase
was

was advertised for sale, either by auction or private contract.—

(Ah ! thought the Orphan of Snowdon, had I been Lord St. Alban, and he the grateful Loretta, it would not have been the purchase of an estate which should have banished *me* ten days from the sight of a beloved object ! But perhaps he loves not—he only supposes that he loves.)

“ The arrangement of this affair required my personal attendance in a distant county. —I made my apology to you, and the same evening began my journey, unaccompanied, unattended.

“ There is nothing so tiresome as travelling in the flesh when the spirit is left behind. This being my case, I entered into an immediate negotiation on the business, which reduced me to this forlorn condition, that I might the sooner return to promote

a reunion of person and heart thus cruelly divided !”

Mrs. Montgomery, as if inspired by his gaiety, remarked, that whatever penance he might suffer, those must be benefited to whom he condescended to relate, with so much humour, the history of his own sufferings !

“ I don’t know,” he replied, gravely, “ how you may be entertained, if your patience will hold to the last page. You may, indeed, find something to pity, but much more to pardon, for I have taken the liberty to use your name very abruptly, and without your permission.”

A man of Lord St. Alban’s integrity, in whatever manner he uses the name of his *protégée*, raises that name into consequence !”

“ Good

“ Good God ! Madam—*protégée* !—my *protégée* !—Another such humiliating phrase, levelled against my pride, will rob me of all confidence, and in your presence silence me for ever.”

“ Well, my good Lord, I am not so hardy to dispute your commands ; so pray tell me on what occasion my name could be serviceable in the business to which you just now alluded.”

“ It has been of the most singular service, my dear Madam ; for in arranging the purchase now fortunately concluded, there was reasons why I desired my own should be secret, so, in the character of your manager, I have substituted the name of Mary Montgomery for that of her obliged St. Alban.”

“ Oh,

[wca]

“ Oh, my Lord, what amiable deception lurks beneath this flattering mystery !”

“ There is no deception, no mystery ; my thoughts, my words, my actions, have but one meaning, one tendency ; one object gives birth to them, and in one wish they are all united.”

His looks were so passionately tender, so fondly rivetted on Loretta, that, oppressed with joy and bashfulness, her head sank on the maternal bosom, as a station of security, from whence she could see, hear, and adore, without annoyance to her timidity, or danger of betraying the strong sensibility to which, every moment, her innocent heart was more and more inclining.

“ And now, Madam,” continued his Lordship, withdrawing his eyes from the daughter full of love, to fix them on the mother, full of hope, blended with respect,

“ now,

“ now, will not your justice acquit me on the charge of deception and mystery, when I frankly confess, that had I asked your consent to the purchase of your late husband's estate, which for my immediate happiness you *must* now possess; had I told you ———”

Mrs. Montgomery made an effort to speak, but Lord St. Alban would not be interrupted.

“ For the love of heaven, let us understand each other,” said he. “ If there be any debtor on this matter, it is myself. I insure my heart of your pardon——I see it proclaimed in a countenance, whose only language is truth.

“ Let us from this moment abolish the word obligation from our vocabulary, and establish equality in its room. I only hand back to you that family property, of which
a villain

a villain had despoiled you ; *you* give me, in return, a jewel more valuable than all the riches of Europe : and if the scale must turn, surely the balance is on your own side."

" I am conquered every way," eagerly replied Mrs. Montgomery, unable longer to contain her emotions. " I must speak, my Lord, or this suffocating silence will kill me ! Help me, beloved Loretta, to express my acknowledgments !"

" I will—I will !—" sobbed the lovely creature, rising and kneeling near her mother, her tear-bedewed face covered with both hands, as afraid to encounter those looks from which she was still more loath to turn away—" I will die at the feet of Lord St. Alban !"

" No—no—no !" cried he, catching her to his heart—" rather say, you will live in
the

the arms of St. Alban ; for there, my angel, it will soon be the pride of honour, and the office of duty, to invite thy innocence !”

“ And *I*,” said she, with courage which nothing could have inspired but the candour, generosity, and delicacy of his own expression, “ *I* will depend on you, my Lord, for the whole sum of my future felicity !”

Thus was the ice broken, and thus the happy trio restored to their proper senses, when Lord St. Alban agreeably filled up the remaining interval of time between the confirmation of his bliss, from Loretta's own lips, to the decorous hour of separation, by renewing a subject, at first too hastily quitted for every purpose, except alarming the spirits of Mrs. Montgomery, and raising the most ardent curiosity, to know how this generous purchase was connected

nected with the immediate happiness of the magnificent purchaser? Lord St. Alban had declared it was so, and only Lord St. Alban could explain the reason why.

I hold myself, at present, entirely independent of his Lordship's recital, and prefer making one of my own: his must have a thousand interruptions; mine shall not have one pause from the beginning to the end, and yet we may probably both arrive at the same grand crisis nearly in the same number of lines, and perhaps in the very same words.

When Lord St. Alban sent his lawyer to make enquiries concerning the present state of affairs at Montgomery Park, besides the information conveyed by his Lordship to the widow of Loretta's father, declaratory of the duration vile to which vice and crimes had reduced his elder brother, there were

were other accounts which he did not communicate to her.

He understood that several purchasers of the insolvent estate, parcelled out in different lots for the convenience of a more ready sale, had taken fright at some mishapen reports, founded on the former enormities of the late possessor to an injured brother, who was vaguely supposed to be living in some foreign country, from whence he might return, after the insolvent's decease, to claim the succession, which, at all events, would be attended with troublesome suits at law, if not with the restitution of property.—Planet stricken, every holder appeared anxious to get rid of his bargain, and the newspapers teemed with advertisements.

Immediately Lord St. Alban thought of turning this alarm to the advantage of his passion for Loretta; who, without birth
and

and fortune, he too well knew would never be acceptable to his mother, but who might think very differently when presented to her with the advantages of being descended from an ancient family, who were still in possession of opulence, and residing in the mansion of her predecessors, a structure of no mean architect. He knew also the respectability of her descent by her mother's side, who was the daughter of an Admiral, more renowned for the staunch bravery of his conduct than for the weight of metal which attended his successes at the head of a British fleet.

This admired veteran, with the liberality of a tar, and the fondness of a father, diverted himself, after the death of his wife, by giving his only daughter the most expensive education that could be devised; and at his demise, left her entirely dependant on the caprices of Fortune, who in her first figaries, at the age of sixteen, threw
her

her amiable, accomplished charge into the arms of a worthy husband ; before her seventeenth year was compleated reduced her almost to starvation ; five years after she tore her again from poor Montgomery, orphaned her children, and aided the ravisher who forced her from them ; now again she was turning her wheel, on the pinnacle of which the mother of Loretta might have presided, if Nature, tired with contending against such frolicsome changes, had not let go her hold, and in her fall pulled down the rising favourite of that fickle goddess to the bosom of her parent Earth !

Lord St. Alban, under the plain appearance of an agent in the business, found no difficulty in repurchasing the dismembered estate of Montgomery on terms tolerably advantageous, and uniting the whole together in the name of the younger brother's widow

widow during her life, with remainder to her children equally divided.

The never-to-be-forgotten liberality of those amiable children in the instance of ministering to the imaginary distress of Lord St. Alban, when he encountered them at Clifton, gave them an equal right to his favours; and he also equally divided his heart between them, allowing only for the different claims of fervent love and dispassionate friendship: there, indeed, the largest portion fell to the lot of the all-enchanting Loretta.

“Cast your bread on the waters, and after seven days you shall find it again,” says the prophet; and was ever prophecy better fulfilled than in the recompence which awaited the bountiful Orphans of Snowdon.

His

His Lordship had but one essential to accomplish after compleating his purchase, which he effected without the smallest pecuniary inconvenience, the funded property saved in his minority being four times as much as he stood in need of: this one was, repairing, beautifying, and furnishing the stately but ill-conditioned family mansion; a work which would require at least six months to perform, or thrice that time, if he had not invested the undertakers with spurs of gold, to quicken their diligence.

“ You will now see, Madam,” said the graceful donor, as he presented the deeds of her estate to Mrs. Montgomery, and after telling her of the reception going forward for her preparations at the Park—

“ you will now see, that selfishness is the great spring of all my motions. Ten days I have absented from your society to promote my own happiness. I now put in
your

your keeping the title deeds of a purchase made for the same end ; and when I conduct you to the seat of your husband's progenitors, it is only to take from thence a dear, an adorable wife, who will be the pride and glory of her St. Alban."

Reader, had you seen the modest delight of that look with which Loretta met the eyes of her noble lover, you would have said, the warmth of sensibility and the graces of virtue were never more resplendently blended ! Or had you beheld the maternal cheek of slow-decaying beauty brightening at every touch of the elegant artist who slowly wrought upon her passions, then would you have cried out——
" Oh ! Joy, how exquisite is thy colouring ! Oh ! Content, how pathetic thy serenity !"

" The duty I owe to my mother," continued his Lordship, passionately kissing the
the

the hand of Loretta, “ is as impregnable to the assaults of invasive inclinations, as my love for this dear creature is strong to oppose all that would rival or impede it.— A happy expedient at once reconciles the duties of a son to the felicities of a lover !

“ Allow me to continue my visits, and to conceal my views only so long as till you are resident at the Park ; then will I glory in declaring them ; then will Miss Montgomery, born of an ancient family, mistress of a thousand pounds a year, find her way to my mother’s heart, not narrowed by avarice, though perhaps warped by certain worldly prejudices, which on many occasions may be necessary in the support of hereditary honours ; an observation I make with the greater freedom, because, had my Loretta been without birth, and without fortune, her beauties and her virtues would have superseded the omission of all other local advantages.”

Neither of his enraptured hearers had a single objection to advance against the wise and good plans of his adoption ; and during three weeks that his Lordship stole on them, almost daily, they had nothing to regret but the shortness of his visits, in which he curtailed himself, to prevent awakening any suspicion of his intentions until every thing was ready for disclosure ; nor did he even mention the name of Loretta to his mother from the time she first saw and admired her at the Maid of Honour's apartment.

Doctor H— continued to call on his interesting patient, but oftener in the character of a friend than physician. He was well acquainted with Lord St. Alban, but he did not know these ladies had ever depended on his bounty ; for it was the request of him, whose word was their law, that, on all occasions, she should assert her legal consequence, and speak of her removal

moval to Montgomery Park as soon as her strength was sufficiently established.

Loretta, at her first entrance on servitude, the better to secure a safe passport for the letters she expected to receive from her few correspondents, had caused them to be directed to Sir John Acres' town residence, for the conveniency of being forwarded by his porter, either to Miss Tillison's apartments in the palace, or to Sir Philip's house in Essex, as the attendance on her Lady might require her to move from one place to the other.

In consequence of this regulation, when fixed at Streatham, she sent her address to her former lodgings at Hampstead, requesting the woman of the house to forward her letters, if any should arrive, and had already heard both from Ireland and the Lodge, which friendly epistles were filled with the overflowing of honest heart-felt affection,

interlarded with congratulations for the recovery of her dear mother; together with good accounts of their own health, but contained no greater matters of importance, every thing remaining in the same state as when they wrote before.

It was intelligence enough for the disinterested orphan of their love, and she had now only to wish for a similar gratification from a tenderly beloved brother, and at last began to grow uneasy at his silence, his last letter being dated from Lisbon, which made her think an answer might have met her impatience in a much shorter time than the seven weeks since she acquainted him of their new obligations to divine Providence, for restoring them the dearest of parents—mentally as well as personally restored.

She often spoke of her fears that something amiss must have happened to Lewis,
but

but never in the presence of her mother, whose strength, in fact, was rapidly on the decline, though the spirits natural to her disorder, exhilarated by the happy prospects awaiting her children, still blinded all around her to the real danger of her situation. It was not, therefore, to this sunbeam of departing day that Loretta poured out the anxiety she could not smother; but having entirely conquered the awe which at first she felt in the presence of Lord St. Alban, or rather his own sweet and gracious attentions having conquered it, to him she opened her innocent heart; he shared in the disappointment of that heart, and at last assured her, if she did not hear from her brother by the next packet, he should insist on her sending a special messenger to Lisbon for that intelligence she so ardently desired.

These conversations were always held in low whispers, whilst Mrs. Montgomery,

sinking under the consumptive habit of her constitution, slumbered in her chair; for most religiously had he kept his promise, never to desire a private interview with Loretta.

It was two days after they last talked together on the subject of Lewis, that, going out to walk in the garden, at the reiterated importunities of her mother, who fancied she looked pale, and that the air would remove her disorder, in passing through the little hall paved with black and white marble, she saw a man, whom she knew to be the letter-carrier, turning into the back entrance.

With the fleetness of double-winged expectation her light steps soon conveyed her by the same path he had taken, till she came up with this anxiously hoped for messenger, when, breathless, she asked, had
he

he any letter for Miss Loretta Montgomery?"

"I have one for a young woman of that name," said he, as he looked over his bag, which contained more than fifty, "but I don't suppose it can belong to your Ladyship, though it may to your maid."

"Give it me—give it me!" cried she eagerly.

"There it is, Madam," he replied, having sorted it from the rest.

She snatched it from his hand, threw him a shilling, and, without waiting for change, flew with the prize to a small pavilion, quite out of Mrs. Montgomery's view, should she draw towards the window, so attentive was this amiable creature to her filial charge, that already she had predetermined, should the letter be from

Lewis, to suppress, when reading it aloud to her mother, whatever passages might afflict or too tenderly affect her.

She did not so much as cast her eyes on the superscription, but, tearing the seal asunder, and throwing down by her side its clumsy envelope, she only saw the well-known writing of her well-beloved Lewis on the elegantly folded letter it inclosed.

It was a letter calculated for the inspection of his mother; tender, but calm; animated, but not violent; descriptive, but not retrospective. He enlarged on their present happiness, without looking back on their past misfortunes.

“ I shall now,” said he, “ soon throw myself into the arms of a mother and sister infinitely dearer to me than I am able to express.

“ Though

“ Though not my own master, I speak thus confidently of my motions, because I have the inevitable affliction before my eyes, that the task of closing those of my noble friend (I had almost said father) is at no great distance.

“ If I have ever seen Lord Templevale one hour better than another, since we have been on the Continent, it was when I communicated to him the joyful intelligence that my Loretta was sheltered in the bosom of our adorable mother. Ah ! with what raptures did he partake of my felicity ! —He pressed me to his heart—smiled—wept—prayed for our dear parent, for you, for me ; in short, never was the sympathy of a father stronger for his own children than what this good and great man testified at the account of our newly acquired treasure. ‘ Now,’ said he, ‘ my dear boy,—now shall I die in peace ; and the offspring of Montgomery shall no more contend

with the harrassing torments of dependence !' To which Lewis added—

“ I believe, my best Loretta, that this most generous of men, whose life I would prolong by adding years of my own to it, if that were possible, will put it in our power to maintain our inestimable mother in comfort ; and if more should be necessary, our cheerful diligence shall procure it for her.”

Loretta read the whole epistle (from which this is only an extract) in much haste, being eager to carry it to her mother, who had, indeed, even a greater share in the contents than herself, when hastily catching up the wrapper, she saw, what she had not seen before, that it was filled with writing, and addressed to *Loretta Montgomery*, which a little surprised her, because it was novel ; but, however, it accounted for the
post.

post-man's remark, that *he did not suppose it could belong to her Ladyship.*

Still the unsuspicious Loretta felt not, by anticipation, the blow that awaited her; but wondering what Sir John Acres' porter could have to say, she calmly set about exploring the mystery, and to her utter astonishment, instead of the porter's writing, found it the scrawl of a female, employed to convey such intelligence as brought her on the borders of distraction. These were the empoisoned contents—

“ I do not like, any more than my Lady, to meddle with profane, disorderly people; but her Ladyship commands that I should forbid you from having your *unvirtuous* letters any more left at *our* house, nor at St. James's Palace, Miss Tillison and my Lady being both of one mind concerning *kept Misses*; so you must expect no favour from *us*.

“ A mighty fine kettle of fish you have made of it ! A mighty pretty change, from rags and beggary to riding in a coach, and living like a lady ! *We* know it is all true, because you have been seen flourishing in your chaise with another *Miss*, I dare say as wicked as yourself, though you went away from your place a poor, lost thing !—making your virtuous Lady believe, forsooth, that you was going to take charge of your sick mother. Mother, indeed !—that is a likely story ! Mothers do not ride about with prostitute daughters, unless they happen to be *bastards*. Besides, the Lady who told my Lady, who told your Lady at the Palace, says the young body who was with you in the carriage, with a footman, forsooth, sticking up behind when she passed by you, was more like your sister than your mother ; and no doubt but she is your sister in iniquity !

“ *Miss*

“ Miss Tillison has told me your direction at Hampstead.

“ If your keeper is an old man, why you may live well in this world, but will be pinched for it in the next : if a young one, you then have sold your soul and body for nothing. Think of that, poor thing !”

Here the unfinished scrawl fell from the hand of suffering innocence. She turned sick at heart, cold chills ran through her veins, her eyes closed, her senses failed, and from the bench on which she sat she sunk down on the floor.

In this state she had not remained many minutes before Lord St. Alban, who was just alighted, hearing from her mother that she was in the garden, went thither to seek her. With the eagle sight of a lover his eyes in an instant took a long survey of every walk, every parterre, and not seeing
her

her any where, he called, but she answered not. He then ran to the pavilion—there, alas! he found her, just raised on her knees, her face pale as death, her hands wrung together in agony!

Ah! what a situation for the contemplation of such a lover as Lord St. Alban! It was a shock which might have reduced him to the same condition, if the hope of assisting her had not reanimated his soul, and redoubled his ardour. With eyes flashing fire——“What!” cried he, raising her in his arms, and seating her by his side——“what has happened to my life’s treasure!—Has any villain presumed to frighten or insult you?—Speak, my love, or I shall be frantic with apprehension!”

She could only weep——to speak was impossible!

He

He saw her brother's letter which had fallen on the ground, and, taking it up, exclaimed—"Here I shall find the cause of your sorrow. Dear creature, compose your spirits, whilst I examine by what sharp weapon your heart has been pierced, and find a cure for the anguish it has occasioned you!"

"It is not that!—it is not that!" was all the poor Loretta could utter, and those few words were interrupted by sobs, whilst she averted her face, to avoid meeting the impassioned looks of Lord St. Alban.

He was scarcely a minute in running over the contents of Lewis's letter, where he could discover nothing inimical to her tranquillity; and again he renewed his intreaties that she would tell him the occasion of her tears, and no longer torture him with suspense—worse than the most wretched certainty!

"Ah!"

“ Ah ! my Lord,” cried she, her cheeks flaming with confusion——“ I cannot—I dare not tell you ; but before you read this,” holding out the fatal scrawl, “ hear the sentence I pass on my own imprudence——Disgraced in the opinion of virtuous women, I can be no wife for Lord St. Alban !”

“ Not my wife !” repeated he, thunder-struck by a declaration so unexpected.

She would have fled from him ; but drawing her trembling arm through his, he detained her his prisoner by force till he had read the transcript of a waiting woman turned Quixote in the cause of virtue, when, stamping it under his feet with contempt, he asked the bashful mourner, if his affection, and the rectitude of her own heart, wanted weight to balance against one moment of chagrin ?

Smiling

Smiling through those tears which his tenderness promoted, she replied, that knowing herself innocent, she felt only for his honour, which must not be tarnished by uniting its unsullied brightness with a creature whose reputation was now blasted for ever !

“ Leave my honour to its own protection, my angel ; and if you think me worthy of so great a trust, put your’s under my guardianship—and may heaven shut its gates upon me for ever, if I abuse your confidence !

“ But go, my dearest life, go back to your mother ; administer the rich cordial of your brother’s letter ; and let her not see by your countenance that another distressed more than this elated you. I will remain here to ruminate alone. You shall know the sequel of my cogitations in due season.

In

—In the mean time I must make this vile scrawl the companion of my solitary moments.”

Loretta, no longer perceiving the necessity of feeding that false delicacy she at first thought must inevitably divide her from the lover on whom her soul doated, promised to obey him in every thing, and went to join her mother, if not chearfully, at least with composure.

Lord St. Alban, with his arms crossed, stood in a thoughtful attitude, watching her steps till he saw her enter the house; then lightly vaulting over a low hedge, that she might not see him go out at the gate, mounted his horse, and at a pace which would have insured the plate, had he been running on the turf, presented himself at the breakfast table of Miss Tillison before that young lady had drank her first dish of tea. His head was giddy with riding so swiftly;

swiftly ; he threw himself into a chair, and requested a glass of water.

The Maid of Honour, not less surprised at so early a visit (for it was not quite eleven), than at the oddity with which it commenced, instead of calling a servant, ran to her dressing-room, brought a glass from her toilet, and presented it to him, which having hastily swallowed, he, with a thousand thanks, apologies, and hesitating excuses, declared himself much better, and took his place by her side with the ease of an invited guest.

Miss Tillison by this time being on an intimate footing, and a great favorite, with his mother, who had also been often attended by his Lordship to her apartments, expressed a great deal of pleasure at hearing him aver, he had that morning come from the country, and had out-rode a jockey, not to lose the opportunity of enjoying her
rational

rational conversation one half hour before she went to the Drawing Room.

“ A truce with your flattering compliments, my Lord,” replied she, smiling, “ I do not pretend to more rationality than other young women. However I am really glad to see you, particularly as I very much wish to know how Lady St. Alban does, how the air of Hampstead agrees with her, when we are to see her again in town?—and for this long list of questions we have quite time enough, for the Queen is slightly indisposed, on which account there will be no drawing-room.”

“ I am glad of it.”

“ What ! my Lord—are you glad the Queen is indisposed ?”

“ Were she *seriously* ill, I should be *seriously* sorry ; but as you call it a slight indisposition,

disposition, there is no harm in expressing part of the very great pleasure I feel, that my audience may be independent of all limits, but such as shall be prescribed by your fair self; and I have much to entreat of your patience."

"Your Lordship may freely command," said she, "whatever small stock of patience I possess. But, pray, first inform me of Lady St. Alban."

"Oh! true—my mother:—why, she is very well, very comfortable, and will soon come back to town, I believe. In return, tell me, I beseech you, what is become of that little handmaiden I saw with you in your royal equipage, and afterwards in this very drawing-room?"

"Have you any particular reason, my Lord, for so strange an enquiry?" asked the Maid of Honour, in a tone of reserve.

"None

“None,” replied Lord St. Alban, pensively, “which ought to offend Miss Tilison.”

“Offended! and with your Lordship!—My question was not in consequence of any doubts I entertain of *your* established honour. But I thought you might have heard;—and the subject always makes me grave—it is so painful to dislike where we have esteemed—so mortifying to condemn what we have approved—that, pardon me if I rather wish to conceal than blazon the errors of a poor, undone creature!”

“Pardon!—Oh! I adore your charitable silence! But is the present object of it really unworthy?—and is that object Loretta Montgomery?”

She shook her head.

“This

“ This ready recollection of a name which I did not apprehend to be familiar to your Lordship, gives me cause to believe that any illustration of her late conduct is quite unnecessary.”

“ No, dear Miss Tillison, it is from *your* compassionate lips, and not from the fame-destroying tongue of monstrous Defamation, that Loretta Montgomery, so far as my opinion is concerned, can be condemned or acquitted ; for she must either be the most deceitful, or the most estimable, of women !—in characters like her’s there can be no medium.”

The Maid of Honour opened her fine blue eyes to the measure of that astonishment by which she was actuated ; and asked his Lordship what she was to understand from the extraordinary warmth of his expression ?

“ I would

“ I would have it unfold to your view, amiable Miss Tillison, the motive to which you owe my intrusion this morning ; but what you cannot guess I will hereafter explain : only first tell me—Did you discover any blameable *traits* in the character of Loretta Montgomery during the whole space of time she had the honour of being under your protection ?”

“ On the contrary !” replied she, tears starting to her eyes. “ I loved her, so did my father, so did my mother, for a thousand amiable qualifications superior to a station which did not seem to degrade her, but which her virtues, real or pretended, appeared to dignify.”

“ So far, then, you make your veracity responsible for this at present disputed reputation !”

“ So

“ So far, *but*, no farther, my Lord !”

“ Charming Miss Tillison ! you have said enough. I want no other evidence of Miss Montgomery’s rectitude since she left *your* family than that of my *own* senses.”

“ Lord St. Alban !—you amaze me !—What do you know of this ill guided girl ? Imprudent she *must* have been ; but if you can convince me she is guilty of nothing more criminal than imprudence, I am ready still to be her friend, and to undeceive Lady Acres, whose opinion of her unworthiness is much deeper rooted than my own.”

“ Curse Lady Acres !” muttered his Lordship.

“ Fie ! my Lord. She does not deserve so horrid an imprecation !”

“ But *she*, and the whole class of scandal *framers*, deserves to be hunted from society, Madam !—They are murderers of the worst description !—destroyers of well-earned tranquillity !—manglers, inhuman manglers, of artless innocence !”

“ And are you *sure*, my Lord, that, in this particular instance, the odious term of scandal *framer* belongs to Lady Acres ?—Can Loretta Montgomery have exchanged dependance for affluence, without giving cause for what you denominate *scandal* ?—If not, Lady Acres must stand acquitted by *justice*, however open to the censure of *redundant* clemency.”

“ There is no other woman than yourself that I could have so long listened to with patience, when my heart is throbbing to defend its divine mistress from the attacks of insulting calumny—I do more, I hear you with admiration. Your distinctions

tions are nicely discriminating——appearances *may* have deceived—and, for your sake, I will try to think with less acrimony of her Ladyship's poisoning abilities; *but*, for her mode of dispensing them——read, Madam (putting the paper which so much injured Loretta into her hand), read, and tell me, if, for an insult like this, she is ever to be pardoned!”

She did read it; and, having done so, confessed such a subject should not have been intrusted to the pen of a servant, who, it was highly probable, from envy, natural to her class, might have given a much stronger colouring to the resentment of Lady Acres, than Lady Acres herself had authorised.”

“If you proceed at this rate,” cried Lord St. Alban, “you will force me to forgive them all in toto. But as you make me merciful, be yourself merciful. Hear

me explain the situation of your *ci-devant* attendant. Examine with generous candour the critical predicament in which I stand :—an honourable passion inviting one way, irresistible duty compelling me another. Till these two extremes can be brought to unite in one point, I ask not only your compassion, but I also implore your assistance.”

“ I shall feel myself,” replied the Maid of Honour, “ gratified by your Lordship’s confidence. On the goodness of your heart, and the rectitude of your intentions, I have all proper reliance, before I engage to serve you, I must not only fully comprehend, but as fully approve, the nature of these services on which you would employ me ; and, before-hand, I declare, that should your requisition of services from me in any manner aim at the peace of Lady St. Alban, through your own degradation, I must renounce the pleasure and honour I shall

shall otherwise experience in promoting your wishes."

"With these conditions I am infinitely satisfied," returned his Lordship, and immediately, with that amiable frankness which might be called the criterion of truth, because, like the Tower stamp, it will cover nothing base, he commenced the interesting history of his heart; and, in less than an hour, it had yielded up the whole of its contents, in which Miss Tillison could find nothing to condemn, but very much to admire.

Master of his own passions, he was no novice in the art of managing those of his fair auditress. As *he* played on the various springs of sensibility, *she* trembled at the touch!—now her compassion was engaged by the woes of Mrs. Montgomery!—now her sympathy for the injured, innocent Loretta. At length, melting into tears,

she clasped her hands together, and exclaimed—"Oh! my Lord, what a tale have you told me! Your generosity is unparalleled—your honour exemplary!—Such as you describe Miss Montgomery, there is not a man in the world can deserve her but yourself. Now I am, indeed, the friend of your mutual attachment; and now instruct me how it will be in my power to serve you."

His Lordship's energy was not so much exhausted in the display of his tender feelings, but that there still remained enough to exemplify those of gratitude.

His charming confidant, instigated by him, promised, without divulging the grand secret, to undeceive Lady Acres, and make *her* undeceive others, to whom, through her means, the ignominious report of Loretta's fall from virtue might most probably have extended.

"This,"

“ This,” said the kind-hearted young patroness of asperfed innocence, “ I fhall eafily effect. There is nothing in the world to which Lady Acres is fo much devoted as to riches : fo religiously does ſhe incline to that fort of worship, that ſhe even bows herſelf down before any other body’s molten image, though fure to reap neither credit or emolument by the unprofitable proſtration.”

“Then I hope, my lovely friend, you will not forget,” cried Lord St. Alban, “to blazon the honest pretensions of my Loretta?”

“That,” said she, “will be my sheet anchor; for when I talk to Lady Acres of family possessions, houses, and parks, I shall soon make her discredit all she has heard, unsay all she has said, and undo all she has done, to the prejudice of Miss Montgomery. Your mother, my Lord, notwithstanding—

notwithstanding she is quite of another description, under your sanction, must be attacked with the same weapons, to pave the way for a favourable reception of your proposals, when you think it convenient to lay them before her Ladyship."

Transported with so much goodness, combined with so much prudence, Lord St. Alban cast himself at the feet of Miss Tillison, to testify his acknowledgements; but she prayed him to rise, saying with a smile, "what a recompence are you making for my good offices; would you expose me like a heroine in romance, to the ridicule of any chance visitor who might happen to drop in and find you in this extraordinary attitude?"

"It is for such charming women as yourself to have every thing their own way," he replied; "so here I stand to receive your further instructions. Yet tell me, I beseech

beseech you, if Lady Acres refuses to believe Loretta innocent, what is to be done then ?”

“ Had I only words to advance,” said she, “ their effects may, as you observe, be uncertain ; but I should hope Lady Acres knows me too well, to suppose I would become the advocate of vice, or that I should bestow my visits on a doubtful character.”

“ Visits !” repeated Lord St. Alban. “ Are you indeed so gracious, so very condescending, to think of honouring my Loretta with a visit ?”

“ First give me leave to ask ; do you, my Lord, intend to marry Miss Montgomery ?”

“ Do I hope for Heaven ! My God, what a question !”

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“ By

“By the same rule, what a question was your’s my Lord! Does not your avowed love sanction my friendship? What graciousness then, what condescension, that a little nobody like me, should aspire to the honour of being well with the future Countess of St. Alban!”

“Bless you!” cried he; “this kindness will restore peace to the broken heart of my angel, whose delicacy has this day been deeply, cruelly wounded.”

Their interesting *tete-à-tete* might have continued much longer, if other company had not been announced, when Lord St. Alban joyfully took himself off, leaving in her possession, a direction to Mrs. Montgomery’s villa. Thither he returned, and Miss Tillison being soon after set at liberty, repaired to the house of Sir John Acres, to begin her attack rather on the justice, than tender feelings of her Ladyship. Besides,
there

there was another inducement for so early an appeal against the severity of that sentence, pronounced by Lady Acres on the unoffending Loretta.

Miss Tillison had of late become extremely fond of Harriet Acres, and she had it in contemplation to make her the companion of a visit which she meditated performing that evening, to the recluses of Streatham.

Miss Tillison was a favoured visitor, and always well received by Lady Acres, not so much on her own account, as for the sake of her Cousin Melbourn, who being a little refractory to the commands of his mamma, had not as yet talked of love to Harriet Acres, although very much had been spoken on that subject to her by his female proxies, which pleased her much better, than to have heard him plead in the same language from himself. Both were extremely satis-

fied with each other as *friends*, and might have grown into lovers, had not their hearts been pre-engaged for the long dance of life, to respective partners of their own chusing. Harriet had tried to like Melbourn, because he was the choice of her parents, but in spite of her best efforts, she could like only Lewis Montgomery.

Algernon Melbourn admired Miss Acres, but could love only his Cousin Olivia, and being informed of each other's sentiments, the most perfect harmony subsisted between them.

Under appearances so flattering, it is not to be wondered at, that the careful mothers of these young people should deceive themselves, by supposing Algernon's tardiness proceeded from reluctance to an immediate change of condition, in which neither the state itself, or the lady was concerned; and that though the marriage had
been

been protracted, it would certainly take place at a more distant period.

To hasten the advance of this desirable event, both Lady Acres and Mrs. Melbourne, paid great court to the Maid of Honour, not suspecting she had any claim on his affections ; but believing her influence over his judgment to be unbounded, they designed making that very influence, which her virtues and his love had created, servicable to their own devices ; nor did their stupidity discover the absolute failure of their deep laid plan, by means of the perfect understanding this united trio had acquired of each other's sentiments, which were one and all revolutionary.

Under these deceptive circumstances, when Miss Tillison entered on the vindication of Loretta, Lady Acres listened with the most flattering condescension, as did her daughter with joy unrestrainable, to the
marvellous

marvellous tale, that accounted, without impeachment of character, for the splendid condition which occasioned so dreadful a vote of censure to fall on the innocent Orphan of Snowdon!—her earliest companion!—her best beloved friend!—the sister of her fondly remembered Lewis! Her delight shone in tears of exquisite sensibility, whilst the pleasure *expressed* by Lady Acres was so mixed with confusion, that the *reality* might have been disputed.

She thought proper to make some apology for the too ready credit given to the malicious slanderers of her poor, dear mother's favourite child of charity—wondered what was become of the boy, her brother—asked a thousand questions about the Montgomery estate, the house, the family, and how these little mendicant mortals, who seemed to belong to nobody, could have arrived at a succession so important?

To

To which Miss Tillison replied,—they had recovered their rights, and were put in possession of them by a person of consequence, who saw them by accident, heard with compassion the accumulated woes by which the parents had been pursued, pitied the widow, loved the orphans, and stopped at nothing less than the full redress of their grievances.

“ It is vastly odd, I declare !” said Lady Acres.

“ What is vastly odd, my dear ?” cried Sir John, who at that moment came into the room ; then stepping to Miss Tillison, —“ and you, my sweet little Maid of Honour,” giving her a friendly shake by the hand, “ what news do you bring from Court, that makes my wife stare, and my daughter’s face look like an April morning ?”

“ Oh,

“ Oh, papa !—such news !—such charming news !” exclaimed Harriet before Miss Tillison had time to answer for herself :—
“ our Loretta is a woman of family !—a woman of consequence !—a woman of fortune !—a woman of the purest modesty, and immaculate honour !”

“ You are extremely rude, Miss Acres,” said her mother. “ Your romantic effusions prevent every body from speaking but yourself ! Pardon her, Miss Tillison, and be so good just to repeat the heads only to Sir John of that strange history you have been giving us.”

“ Between you both,” cried the baronet, “ I comprehend enough to make me eager for the whole history, so far as it concerns my favourite Loretta Montgomery, who has been most inhumanly, and, I dare say, most unjustly scandalized ! Come, then, my fair one, from you I hope an explanation

planation which will rejoice me as much as it may have given pain to other people," casting a glance of reproach at Lady Acres, who replied, with the most perfect *sang froid*, that it was sufficient for her to be satisfied with whatever she did, and not trouble herself about subsequent consequences.

Harriet, fearing one of those domestic storms which now frequently disturbed the atmosphere of connubial sunshine, touched the sleeve of her young friend, who, taking the hint, soon got the talk all to herself, and by the time her twice-told tale was ended, Sir John's pleasant humour appeared uninterfered by a single cloud. Even Lady Acres seemed penetrated more than before with the good fortune of her mother's *protégées*.

When the Maid of Honour declared she would embrace the amiable Loretta that
very

very afternoon——“ Oh ! for God's sake, take me with you,” cried Harriet.

“ Certainly,” she replied, “ if I have the permission of Sir John and Lady Acres.”

“ Yes, she shall go,” said Sir John ;—
“ and you may tell the sweet creature how anxious my wife and I are to pay our compliments to Mrs. Montgomery, as well as to assure herself of our hearty love, joy, and good wishes.”

“ There is a great deal too much of it, Sir John,” peevishly remarked her Ladyship.”

“ Well, if you think so, my Lady, I will make a change of the message. Tell her, Harriet, that she has been scurvily used by those whose duty it was to have cherished and supported her !”

“ If

“ If *I* am included under this degrading addition to your former *servile* message, Sir John, it shall never be delivered by any daughter of mine !”

“ Come, come, my dear—can we send a better ambassadess? Either you or I have been much to blame, I do not say which ; but a pardon must be obtained for the offender, and who so likely to obtain it as Harriet ?”

“ Sir John Acres—how dare you affront me so grossly !”

“ Lady Acres—how did *you* dare to insult, by promulgating your own suspicions, the character of a virtuous young woman ? —How dare you to do her so great an injury, yet refuse to solicit her forgiveness.—Had I injured a shoe-black, by G—, I would beg his pardon ! But, since you are so d—d proud, Harriet shall leave *you* out

out of the question; and ask only the remission of her father's sins, for permitting any member of *his* family to act in ill-natured opposition to his own sentiments !”

“ You know, Sir John, that the reports against her were not of *my* raising.”

“ I know they were of your spreading. — Ask Miss Tillison whether *she* ever heard them from any other authority ?”

The young ladies now both interfered to quell a contention which promised no quiet termination ; and by directing their force all on the side of Lady Acres, brought about so compleat a reconciliation, that they were mutually charged with the love of each party to Miss Montgomery ; as also to signify their intentions of soon waiting upon her with their personal congratulations.

Harriet

Harriet afterwards, as was often her custom, went to dine with the Maids of Honour; and in the evening her father's carriage attended to convey her and Miss Tillison to Streatham.

On the road they passed Lord St. Alban, who, with a smiling bow, kissed his hand to Miss Tillison; but guessing to what port she was bound, and uncertain as to the destination of her travelling companion, or how far she might be in their confidence, he made no effort to detain her.

“Who is that handsome man?” asked Miss Acres. “I think you seem to understand one another; and,” added she, laughing, “take care, lest I whisper my *imaginary* lover that I suspect he might find a rival in the formidable stranger, whose looks you meet with so much cordiality.”

“To

“ To prevent your mischievous intentions, I shall tell you a secret,” replied the Maid of Honour. “ It is that, unhappily for me, however fortunate for my cousin, I can have no variety of choice between Algernon and Lord St. Alban, the latter being already bespoken.”

“ Well,” cried she, “ I could almost find in my heart to envy the woman by whom he is bespoken.”

“ What ! and forget poor Lewis !”

“ Perhaps,” answered Harriet with a sigh, “ it might be quite as well if I *could* forget him ! He never thought of me—why, then, should I think of him ?—But I am a fool !”

“ Indeed, my dear, I must join in the same opinion, if you begin to despair, when Hope gives you so sweet a peep into her treasury.

treasury. Lewis Montgomery is no more the needy orphan of unknown parents, but of birth and fortune that will bring no disgrace on your own. If he has not declared his preference for you to all other women in the world, it is only modest inferiority that restrains him. Every bar is now removed but one, which will not long be an impediment; for this day cousin Algernon has gained upon my aunt Melbourn to accept me for her daughter. To-morrow they set out together for Essex; and when my parents have sanctioned our union, then your mother will be let into the whole mystery, but not before; such being the decree of my aunt, who fears Lady Acres almost as much as she loves her son."

"That which will be my mother's disappointment makes my felicity," said the delighted Harriet. "Truely ridiculous as has been the predicament in which I have stood, ever since my suppositious engagement

ment to your cousin, I am sure, from his own confession, my poor fellow-sufferer has had his share of the *disagreeables*; and I thank you with all my heart, dearest Olivia, for shackling him, and setting me at liberty."

"Because you may think with impunity on Lewis Montgomery!"

"No:—to think of him would be madness!"

"And not to think of him impossible!"

"Oh! for God's sake, Miss Tillison, never hint to our Loretta that her brother is any thing to me! Once more, for the thousandth time, I aver to you, I have no reason to hope, I mean to believe, my opinion of his merit is of any consequence to him. Or suppose, just for argument's sake,

fake, he should have remembered me with kindness!—what then? Can you suppose my mother, however my father may incline, will ever consent that poor one thousand a year shall join hands with their vast property, to which, alas! for my torment, there is no other heir than myself?”

“ Yes,” replied the Maid of Honour, “ I shall certainly keep your counsel. But as to your mother’s objections, they do not appear to me half so invincible as you imagine. Excuse me, my dear, if I say the idolatry of money is not the only propensity by which the mind of Lady Acres is governed. Rank has certainly the second, if not the first, place in her affection; so that though she may refuse you to Lewis Montgomery, she as surely will not reject such proposals as are made to you by the brother of Lady St. Alban!”

Harriet was silent from astonishment ;— but how did her wonder increase, when, under the seal of secrecy, Miss Tillison unfolded the bright prospects awaiting her beloved Loretta, in becoming the Countess of Lord St. Alban.

Nothing was concealed of their extraordinary adventures—nothing forgot of his humanity to her mother—of his generosity to her family—of his tender, honourable, and passionate attachment to herself.

Long as the road appeared to Harriet before this delightful topic was brought on the *tapis*, her affectionate impatience to embrace Loretta seemed subsided, or rather inundated, by emotions of joy, so exquisite, so impetuous, as to overwhelm all other desires but that of prolonging the charming *tête-à-tête*, from which she privately drew consequences to herself of the most flattering complexion.

But

But all extremes of pain or pleasure must have an end, and I leave the fair gossips almost at the end of their drive, though not of their tale, just to look back on the Orphan of Snowdon, from that time when, at her noble lover's request, the agonized girl returned to her mother with Lewis's letter in her hand, expecting every moment his re-appearance in the parlour.

Mrs. Montgomery was so fully engrossed by the contents of her son's duteous epistle as not to be alarmed at the agitation of voice which announced them, the trembling fingers which retained them, the crimson glow of insulted innocence that covered her intelligent countenance, or the tears of sorrow which strayed down the cheeks of Loretta, as if to quench the burning blushes shame had imprinted on them. —The only observation made by her tender mother went no further, than to suppose these symptoms had their origin partly in

the pleasing expectation of soon seeing her beloved brother, partly from the pain she must naturally experience for the loss, both to Lewis and herself, of such a friend, such a benefactor, as Lord Templevale.

Of these ideas the prudent Loretta did not attempt to dispossess her, to make room for *suggestions* which might be equally fatal to her peace, as the reality of disgrace had already blasted the fairest of her own prospects.

With indescribable anxiety three quarters of an hour she waited by the side of her mother, listening to every step, and starting at every sound, beyond the door of their apartment; till, unable any longer to restrain her emotions, pretending to have left her handkerchief in the garden, she ran thither, not to look for what she had not lost, but to send her eager eyes in search of Lord St. Alban.

It

It was in vain that she sought him every where——“He has forsaken me!” cried she in a voice of distraction. “Ungenerous St. Alban! whose notice has tarnished my fame!—are you the first to confirm my suppositious guilt!—to fix, by your cruel desertion, a lasting stain on the purity of that wretched orphan, once cherished by your charity!—raised from nothingness to importance by your benevolence!—and, oh, God! taught to raise her humble views a flight beyond ambition by your partiality!”

Giving vent to exclamations like these, Loretta continued so long absent, that her mother came into the garden, thinking something very particular must have happened.

The airy fleeting form of this dear parent, with panting respiration, approaching towards her, first recalled the frantic

L 3

mourner

mourner to some degree of recollection.—She assured her nothing was the matter—assumed the appearance of serenity—assisted her mother to make a short tour round the walks—talked cheerfully of her brother, and even when they sat down to table, though choaking with internal agony, strove to eat; but would certainly have failed in the effort, if, before the fork touched her lips, Lord St. Alban had not made his entrance, more lively, more animated, more happy, than she ever saw him look before.

Loretta's eyes alone spoke the revolution in her mind from sadness to joy, from despair to hope, as her elegant lover sat down between the delighted mother and the *more* than delighted daughter. To the former he made a studied apology for dropping in at an hour so unseasonable (the servant being present), and to his beautiful embarrassed mistress paid only those silent attentions

tions which none but themselves could understand, till the cloth was removed and the domestic withdrawn, when, taking a hand from each of his fair neighbours, he asked Mrs. Montgomery's pardon for the abruptness with which he had made his enquiries after her health that morning; and then, before she had the power to announce his forgiveness, turning to Loretta —“ And you, my sweet love,” said he, “ *you*, I fear, have condemned your faithful St. Alban as a monster of——.”

Loretta interrupted him with a look which told him that her mother knew nothing of the interview that had taken place between them in the garden; and seemed also to beseech him that she might still be spared the mortification of knowing the dreadful disgrace under which she was so unhappily suffering.

L 4

He

He comprehended the silent caution, and continued substituting the phrase of *unpoliteness* for that of *ingratitude*; then added—"My dear Madam, I can no longer keep my approaching felicity to myself—it is too great for my own heart. Since I saw you last I have disclosed it to an amiable friend of *my* Loretta; as *mine*, I hope she will not be displeased to receive the congratulations of Miss Tillison, who, as my future wife, longs to bring them to her in person; and I have some reason to think she will pay her compliments to Mrs. Montgomery this very evening. I cannot stay to partake of her visit; I have other and momentous business which must carry me to Hampstead before I sleep."

Mrs. Montgomery, who, in the most lively expressions, was yielding up her whole soul to gratitude, saw, with astonishment, her lovely daughter at the feet of her noble lover, and heard her say—"Dear, generous

generous Lord St. Alban, preserver of the widow's life!—preserver of the orphan's reputation!—and at what a price have you redeemed it! Ah! to what honours exalted the fallen Loretta!”

“ You affect your mother too much, my best love !” said his Lordship, raising her in his arms.

“ Oh, God !” cried her mother, “ what is this I hear ! Explain the meaning of those terrible words, the *fallen Loretta* !—If Loretta has——.”

He interrupted her, smiling—“ No, my dear Madam ! Angels themselves have fallen ; but your angel daughter never fell ! —Her present situation, it seems, has been misunderstood, through the medium of a well intended but injurious concealment on my part. I have seen my error, and taken

L 5

steps

steps to counteract the pernicious consequences of a too timid discretion.

“ I leave her to a fuller discussion of this implicated charge ; and if you do not see me again to-morrow, be assured it is only the hastening my union with the loveliest and best beloved of women which can occasion my detention beyond that time.— Then kissing the widow’s hand, and embracing the orphan in a more than christian-like manner, he left them, utterly incapable of cloathing their thoughts in any garb resembling language ; and scarcely had Loretta, after he was gone, rehearsed the frightful incidents of the morning, before she found herself alternately pressed in the arms of Harriet Acres and Miss Tillison.

To say more would be to assume the right of dictating to young ladies how they ought to have felt, and what they ought to have said, on such an occasion, and to such visitors,

visitors, had they been exactly in the same situation with the once humbled but now exalted Loretta.

From the moment of their departure, which was not till late in the evening, she longed impatiently for the lapse of time, again to pour out her lively ardour of acknowledgments to Lord St. Alban, for the exquisite felicity brought home to her heart through the medium of his unprecedented generosity.

Sleeping or waking his image was ever before her—always lovely, amiable, and beloved! But in her disjointed dreams, sometimes he appeared distressed, afflicted by difficulties, from which she saw him vainly endeavouring to extricate himself.—Her sleep had been so often interrupted by restless visions of the night, that she lay in bed much longer than usual, and was at

last awakened by her maid, who came to tell her a lady waited for her in the parlour.

She asked if it was either of those she had seen on the preceding evening.—“No,” was the reply; but a tall, elderly person, who looked to be of vast consequence, and came in a fine coach, attended by several servants.

Mrs. Montgomery was still sleeping.—Loretta, without disturbing her, soon arranged her own external appearance, whilst her internal disorder increased every moment. A thousand times she repeated to herself, Who can this visitor be? and before she reached the parlour door not one sanguine drop gave animation to her cheeks, or coloured her lips with their accustomed coral. Her limbs trembled as she turned the lock, but fight did not desert her till her eyes were encountered by those of St. Alban's mother; and, in her terrified imagination,

gination, those of a basilisk would not have been more fatal.

The Countess, taking her hand, addressed her with so much kindness, that her terrors began to subside, and were soon entirely vanquished, by her dreaded visitor's augmenting condescension.

“ I have surpris'd you,” said she, “ my dear Miss Montgomery ; but why should my presence alarm you ? I shall not forgive myself for a well meaning yet too sudden intrusion, unless I see you reassume that sweet serenity my eagerness to forestal my son in his devoirs has put to flight.”

Loretta attempted to speak, but Lady St. Alban gently laying her hand on the quivering lips of the agitated Loretta——
“ I will not permit you to utter a syllable,” said she in tones the most gracious, “ until

til I have told you the cause of my coming hither at so early an hour. Sit down, my child ; cast off that reserve which ought not to exist between those who must hereafter be even something more than friends."

Loretta's face was now covered with blushes, as she signified her obedience by a graceful bend of her beautiful person.

" Suppose St. Alban," continued her Ladyship, " had been himself the messenger of my consent to his union with you, I think you would not have been more embarrassed than to hear the same tidings announced by his mother. Yes, my dear, I give it with all my heart ; not as a tribute to your charms, but as the reward of your virtues !"

The Orphan of Snowdon, oppressed by such unexpected generosity, fell down at the feet of Lady St. Alban. The most
tender

tender scene ensued, and was succeeded by a candid confession of the difficulties Lord St. Alban encountered before he could accomplish his purpose. "I did not believe," said she, "all the fine things he told me of your birth, fortune, &c. I thought it the romance of a lover; but when he mentioned your mother as the daughter of Admiral Montague, in that name I recognized my earliest, best beloved friend; to whose fate, since she was sixteen, I have been a stranger.

"Bitter were the tears I shed over the repetition made by my son of her misfortunes; lively the joy I anticipated of embracing this dear school companion, whom I had so long supposed to be numbered with the dead.

"Your artful lover made his advantage of one weak moment—gained my ready assent to whatever he proposed—and the
only

only wreck I could preserve of ancient authority, was the unmolested right of seeing you alone this morning. I learnt from him at what time your mother is visible. I heard with concern her constitution is extremely delicate, and therefore contrived to come alone, by which we avoid surprising or incommoding her by the gathering together of too many happy people, for whose visits she can only be prepared by your interposition.

“ Go, then, to her chamber, my dear — Tell her Lady Ann Denison (for she knows me by no other appellation) is come to renew their long interrupted friendship. — And you may tell her too,” added she, smiling, “ by what means it is to be established more firmly than ever. Remember also, the moment she is able to admit me, I must be conducted to the side of her bed, there to ratify our alliance, before St. Alban

ban comes to disturb, with his ardours, the tranquil moments of explanation."

The precaution which banished Lord St. Alban, even for the short space of an hour, Loretta thought might have been dispensed with ; but experience taught her the wisdom and necessity of such a measure : for cautiously as the joys of this eventful day were administered, to her already half dissolved parent was more than her feeble nature could support, without giving many evident symptoms of incapability to support any additional intuition from the exquisite touches of sensibility.

Nothing could be more trying than her first interview with the generous and affectionate Lady St. Alban——No, not even the raptures she sustained, when, at the mutual sollicitations of both mother and son, the time for the nuptials of her Loretta

retta was fixed, at no greater distance than one month.

It was at the instigation of love, on the part of Lord St. Alban, and of benevolence on that of his mother, which brought the important affair to so hasty a conclusion.

Lady St. Alban saw at the first glance what the poor Loretta had never discovered, that she would soon be an orphan in the fullest acceptation of the word. At such a crisis, where could she be so safely sheltered, so tenderly comforted, as in the arms of an affectionate husband; and besides, she also compassionated her son's disappointment, if that sorrowful event should *precede* his marriage, which must inevitably protract it beyond the limits of a lover's patience; and, for all these good reasons, she not only insisted on naming the day of their union, but, by the irresistible pleadings of friendship, persuaded Mrs. Montgomery

gomery at the end of a week to remove, with the beautiful Loretta, to her Ladyship's house in town; from whence, with the full approbation of the family to whom she was so soon to be connected, she dispatched the credentials of her good fortune to her brother, as well as her affectionate allies both in Ireland and at the Lodge, her happiness being incomplete till she had made them participate of it.

In short, Loretta, at the time appointed, became the wife of Lord St. Alban, who received her hand from Sir John Acres.—His Lady assisted at the ceremony, whilst Miss Acres and Miss Tillison officiated as bride-maids on the joyful occasion.

A few days subsequent to that event the death of Lord Templevale was doubly announced to the united families of Montgomery and St. Alban. The public prints merely mentioned that he died at Lisbon,
without

without naming his successor ; but the letters of Lewis to his mother and sister, fraught with the ardours of filial and fraternal love, breathing the sincerest, heartfelt anguish for the loss of his paternal benefactor, conveyed to them also the account of his own heirship to the title and immense fortune of his Lordship, a legacy to Loretta of thirty thousand pounds only excepted.

With the same christian spirit of moderation in which this letter was written, so was it received by the widow and daughter of Montgomery. In adversity they had not forgotten to serve God—in prosperity they did not forget to glorify his providence—crying out, in the words of the Psalmist, ‘ Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy name be the praise !’

There was one private paragraph in Lewis’s letter to his sister, which she confided

fided to Harriet, who bound it to the cords of her heart, as a fund of felicity on which she could draw for the subsistence of hope—famished, almost expiring, for want of nourishment! It spoke the tenderest, the most respectful, the most ardent passion for the lovely, compassionate little friend of that wretched condition from which they were relieved by the charity of her fainted grandmother, on the hills of Mendip; together with a declaration, that his new rank and riches acquired their chief value in his estimation from placing him in a station, from whence he might venture, without incurring the censure of arrogant presumption, to lift his eyes to an alliance with the descendant of their ever revered benefactress.

“ I shall soon,” said he, “ learn my fate from the lips of the divine Harriet. My detention at Lisbon will be no longer than till the proper preparations are made for removing

removing the body to England. If she announces me happy, there will be my future residence; if she condemns me to misery, any other country will give me a greater chance for tranquillity than my own."

Fourteen days after the receipt of these dispatches the amiable Lewis, having, by the last commands of Lord Templevale, seen his remains deposited in the most private manner at Ferryford Castle, borrowing wings from Loves of every description, flew to the bosom of his family.

Such a meeting is better imagined than described. The cup of his fond mother's joys was now filled to the brink: the only drop it could yet contain was thrown into it by the marriage of her son with his first and only love, on the same day which joined the hands of Algernon Melbourn and Olivia Tillison; when, having no greater happiness

happiness to expect in this world, her aspiring spirit fought to perfect its bliss in heaven, where, no doubt, if mortal claims are admitted, her sufferings, her patient resignation, and her piety, were not rejected as insufficient.

Gloomy death-bed scenes, and melancholy details of these afflictions which naturally arise to the survivors, ought to be avoided, especially at the end of a book, that we may not be accused of leaving disagreeable impressions on the reader's mind; for which reason I skip over six months, from the decease of Mrs. Montgomery to the time of throwing open the gates of Montgomery Park.

Where I exhibit to their view, happily assembled under that hospitable roof, the following persons and personages:—The Countess Dowager of St. Alban, Loretta and her Lord, Sir John and Lady Acres,
Lord

Lord Templevale and his Harriet, the good Curate of Snowdon and his sister, dear Daddy Brown and his worthy dame; and to this number the honest-hearted Mrs. Orchard and Jonathan would certainly have been added, if they had not been posted at their usual station to prepare for the reception of their new Lord and Lady at the Lodge, with a long train of friends in their suit.

The venerable Evans, and his charitable, sister, had, at the request of the well remembered Orphans of Snowdon, attended the body of their revered father from Snowdon to the Park, where, with due solemnity, it was deposited by the side of his wife, in the vault of his ancestors.

Evans was rewarded with a benefice of six hundred a year by Lewis, and Loretta settled half that sum on his sister for life.

A superb

A superb monument closed the filial duties of Lewis and Loretta, on which was inscribed these words—

Erected by
Lewis Montgomery, Baron Templevale,
And
Loretta, Countess of St. Alban,
To perpetuate the Memories
Of
Their pious Parents,
By whose Virtues they are exalted,
And
In whose Deeds they are blessed!

THE END.

OF THE

A report made to the
House of Lords and
presented to the
House of Commons—

By
J. MONTAGU, Esq.
of the Middle Temple

OF THE
OF THE

OF THE
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OF THE
OF THE

THE END



Just published,

IN FIVE VOLUMES,

LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT.

A NOVEL.

BY MRS. GUNNING.

IN THE PRESS,

THE

GIPSY COUNTESS,

Partly founded on Facts.

BY MISS GUNNING.

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HEIR APPARENT.

BY THE AUTHOR

THE COUNT DE POLAND.